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[LORD TRACEY SEIZED HONOR'S ARM AND TRIED TO GAIN POSSESSION OF THE WEAPON IN HER HAND.]

## TWO MISS DANES.

### CHAPTER XVII.

ALMA BERTRAM (or Lady Tracey, to give her the name which was hers in law, although she had never borne it) left the Chestnuts with a strange sense of peace. Never since the day when she had jilted Kenneth Dane had she felt so hopeful.

Hitherto a bitter remorse had haunted her in every lonely hour, mingled with dread that trouble would fall on her for her cruel treatment of her lover.

Alma had always feared she must suffer herself because she had made Kenneth suffer; but, strangely enough, now that he was laid low, now that because of her he had been stricken down by a cruel blow, now that one would have thought her grief would have been greater than ever, her remorse left her.

Alma was a butterfly, but she possessed one quality many far nobler women lack: she could read character well and quickly.

She felt, as she looked into May Dane's

beautiful eyes, that here was the wife who could make Sir Kenneth happy.

She recognised, with a strangely keen perception, the nobler qualities of the girl who had at first sight seemed to her only an idealized portrait of herself.

She knew that May would be to Kenneth what she could never have become—a true helpmeet. Thrown together during his long illness and gradual convalescence he would surely find this out, and then—he would forgive his first love.

Looking forward in a blissful day-dream, Alma saw herself Rupert Tracey's acknowledged wife; perhaps, on friendly terms with May when that other marriage had come off.

"If I tell him myself," thought the girl, hopefully, "he won't be hard on me. Rupert loves me, and love forgives a great deal. If he had found it out I believe he would have cast me from him; but if I confess how I deceived him he will forgive. I am thankful I went to the Chestnuts to-night and saw Miss Dane. I think she must be something like the angels!"

Alma met with no reproof from her aunt

when she reached home. Truth to say, Mrs. Bertram was very much softened by her sister-in-law's death.

Alma's white, troubled face touched her heart, and she was kindness itself to the poor girl, and of her own accord suggested her niece should not get up to breakfast the next day.

"You look fairly done up," she said, kindly, "and a good sleep is the best thing for you."

Alma went to bed believing she should not close her eyes. But she was mistaken; she fell into a dreamless sleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow; and when she awoke, the little American clock on the mantelpiece pointed to seven o'clock.

Alma lay still and listened. She meant to go to Otterley at all hazards, but she much preferred her aunt not knowing of the expedition.

She went over in her head the list of Mrs. Bertram's morning duties, and decided her time for escape was at eight o'clock when her aunt invariably read prayers to her niece and the young servant, while the lodgers were at breakfast.

This was Alma's chance. She could slip downstairs noiselessly, and even if Mrs. Bertram heard the closing of the street door she would probably take it for little Cissy Hargrave, who always went about that time to pick up the newspaper which was deposited on the step in rather an erratic fashion.

Poor Alma! Trains to Victoria were frequent. She was only ten minutes' walk from Brixton station. Yes, if she started at eight o'clock she would be in heaps of time.

It told something of the mental conflict she had undergone that she did not linger over her toilet, and made no attempt to adorn herself for her husband's eyes.

A thrill of horror came over her at the bare idea of putting on gay clothes to tell the story she had to relate. A quiet gray dress, the plainest in her wardrobe, and a small black straw hat trimmed with velvet, were hastily put on. Then Alma took up her gloves and waited, till, the rattle of cups and saucers subsiding, she knew that the little servant had taken in Mrs. Hargrave's breakfast and gone to join in the family prayers, where this morning she would be her mistress's sole congregation.

Alma crept down with noiseless footsteps, hoping against hope no one would hear her. The street door was in a compliant mood, and closed without the horrid scroop it was apt to indulge in.

Then the girl turned round the corner and ran down the next street, almost as though she feared being captured and brought back.

Arrived in the Brixton-road she went at a more rational pace, and, catching a train as soon as she reached the station, she found herself at Victoria with a good twenty minutes to spare.

She went into a baker's shop close by, and asked for a glass of milk and a roll. The latter almost choked her, but she forced herself to swallow a few mouthfuls, knowing that she had three hours of railway travelling before her, and that her strength would give way entirely if she started on her journey fasting.

A porter, touched by the sight of the white, weary face, got her ticket for her, and found her a quiet carriage, but he could give very little information as to her journey. She must change at Horeham, and then take a slow train, but he couldn't say when she would get to Otterley.

There were not many passengers, and no one appeared to disturb Alma's solitude. The girl leaned back in her corner and tried to plan out her expedition.

Only now, when she had fairly embarked on her enterprise, did she remember that her husband was the guest of people she had never seen, and who might possibly ignore the fact that their friend Lord Tracy was married.

"Rupert will have told them," poor Alma tried to persuade herself; "he has been there a month, and surely he must have found an opportunity. Besides, he said in his last letter he was almost certain of being Miss Dane's bailiff. I hope," and she blushed crimson, "they won't think I have come hoping to stay with them. I shall tell them I came to speak to Rupert on important business, and that I must get back to-night. Oh! I hope I shall see him first alone. It will be dreadful for us to meet with two strange women looking on; but Rupert said Mrs. Dane was very kind and motherly, and I should think the heiress must be nice. She is own aunt to Miss May, who I am sure is just like an angel."

Alma Bertram had never visited at any large house except the Chestnuts; and the very nature of her position there as Mrs. Mantelth's future daughter-in-law had tended so put things on a friendly, informal footing. She had always gone with Kenneth, and been received in homely, friendly fashion.

Of the stern etiquette which prevails in such establishments as Honor Dane's, she had no notion. It might be awkward if she found Rupert out, but of any other difficulty she never thought.

She travelled third class; perhaps from a

scruple of spending May's loan on luxury; perhaps because she had thought so much yesterday of raising even that humble fare, that she never realised that she could have commanded a first-class ticket.

For once in her life, Alma was quite carried out of her petty affections and girlish airs and graces. The next few hours would decide her whole future. When her husband had heard her story, she would look in his eyes and read her fate.

She had over half-an-hour to wait at Horeham, and when she at length got into the little local train for Otterley she found her solitude at an end.

Every carriage had a fair complement of passengers, and she thought herself lucky to find a place in one with only two market gardeners and their baskets.

There sat at the farther end. In Alma's vicinity were two respectably dressed women, looking like upper servants. They were evidently friends who had met unexpectedly, and their conversation was eager and incessant.

For some time it fell unheeded on Alma's ears; then the sound of a familiar name made her start to sudden interest.

"Yes," the younger woman was saying, gravely; "I won't deny I've a good situation at Horeham, Mrs. Tubbs, but I've not got over regretting Dances Croft and my old mistress. I'd not have stayed with the present Miss Dane if she'd have begged me on her bended knees; but I shall never be as happy anywhere as I was at the Croft."

"Things are finely altered now," said Mrs. Tubbs, shaking her head. "There's three times as many servants, and Miss Dane flings money away right and left. It's a blessing her ma's got plenty for I should think she spent more than old Sir Geoffrey ever had."

"And does she go about like a lady?" inquired Mary. "We used to think the gentry 'ud have none of her."

"She goes everywhere," returned Mrs. Tubbs, who, from subsequent remarks, Alma guessed to be lodge-keeper at some large house near the Croft. "You see, Mary, she's plenty of money, and she comes of a good family on the father's side."

"Well, to my mind, her ma, who came of no family at all, is much more the lady," returned Mary, sharply. "I suppose she's still at the Croft."

"Oh dear, yes. She'll stay there altogether till the young lady marries. There's nothing given out, but there's a fine-looking young nobleman staying there now, who's always dancing after her; and it's easy to see how things'll go."

"They used to say she'd marry Lord Monkton."

"He won't give her the chance. He's not been in Sussex for weeks. No; it's Lord Tracy who's going to marry Miss Dane, and I'm sure he'll live to repent it."

Pleasant, this, for Alma to hear. She bent her head forward to catch Mary's reply.

"I suppose she puts on different manners for him?" said the maid, scornfully. "I haven't forgotten the first night she came to the Croft, and how she treated Miss May."

"Well," returned Mrs. Tubbs, "they do say she just worships the ground that he walks on, but that he isn't much in love; but you know, Mary, the quality manages things very different from us. He's got a title, and she's got money, so I expect the match'll come off."

Alma never doubted her husband. She knew that she was his own free choice, and that he loved her dearly; but this chance gossip convinced her of two things. Honor Dane would have no kindly welcome for Lord Tracy's wife; the other, that however much she and Rupert had to economise in their early married life, she would rather he did not become bailiff to the Lady of Dances Croft.

Love had taught Alma at least one lesson—perfect faith. Not so very long ago she had told Kenneth Dane he could not care for her since he would not give up his independence

for her sake; but now, even though her husband had been for over a month Honor's guest, though he had postponed his return to London again and again, yet Alma felt no shade of jealousy, even when she heard the plain statement that Miss Dane "worshipped the ground" he walked on.

To a certain extent the gossip changed Alma's plans. She believed nothing against Rupert, but she felt a dim conviction there was some truth in the remarks about Honor Dane. She would go to the Croft and ask to see Lord Tracy on business, instead of, as she had first intended, sending in her name.

At last the train stopped at Otterley. Mrs. Tubbs and Mary alighted first, and were seated in a respectable carrier's cart before Alma found a porter and asked him the way to Dances Croft.

"It's beyond Little Otterley, ma'am," returned the young man, civilly, "a matter of five miles. You'd better have a fly."

Alma hesitated. For Rupert's sake she could not join the passengers in the carrier's cart. A five miles' walk seemed beyond her strength.

"Could you get me one soon?" she asked, anxiously.

"There'll be one round in ten minutes, ma'am. One was ordered to bring a gentleman to catch the London train, and the driver'll be glad enough of a fare back again. There's mostly something to meet the later trains; but we don't get many folks by this one."

It was only five minutes before the fly came up, and a grave, elderly gentleman alighting, Alma thankfully took his place, and was soon driving along the pleasant country lanes, beautiful in all the glory of the last of summer.

And now that the last stage of her journey had begun, poor Alma's courage waned. She dreaded the next hour as she had never, perhaps, dreaded anything before. If Rupert refused to forgive her, if he looked at her in loathing—nay, if he even turned from her in contempt—she felt she should never survive it. There would be nothing for her then but to creep away and die.

Over and over again, poor child, she rehearsed the confession. She had deceived him. His was not her first betrothal ring. She had jilted another lover before ever he saw her face, and then, dreading lest he should hear of her falsehood, she had spoken bitterly against this injured suitor, and charged him with bad qualities he never possessed, and now her name was a by-word throughout England as the girl for whose sake Sir Kenneth Dane had been shot and grievously wounded.

The fly passed through the lodge gates and drove up the avenue. Alma paid the man; and with trembling steps walked up the broad terrace steps. She had no need to knock or ring. A manservant had seen the fly, and came forward before she reached the door—a very dignified-looking retainer, in livery, with powdered hair.

Alma looked at him, and wondered whether he had read that morning's newspaper, and gloated over the Champion Hill tragedy.

"Can I see Lord Tracy?"

The servant stared. That Lord Tracy had neither sister nor cousin he was well aware. That a girl should come to the Croft, asking to see a bachelor guest, to whom she was in no way related, seemed to him decidedly peculiar. He looked at poor Alma condescendingly from head to foot, and replied,—

"His lordship is out at present."

"I wish to see him particularly," said the stranger, gravely, with a quiet dignity which impressed Charles in spite of himself. "My business is of importance, and—"

The sentence was never finished. Someone else had noticed the fly's arrival, and Nancy Dane, marvelling at Charles's delay in announcing the visitor, came out into the hall in time to hear Alma's last words.

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her motherly heart took in the white, weary look on Alma's face, and she pitied the girl deeply, "you shall see Lord Tracey as soon as he returns. He has gone for a ride with my daughter, but I expect them home every minute."

The servant retired, perhaps not sorry to have the matter taken out of his hands. Mrs. Dane led the way to her own sitting-room. Some instinct she could not have explained made her feel it better to take this strange visitor where she would be least likely to meet Honor.

"You must let me order some refreshment for you," she said, noticing how Alma trembled. "You seem very tired."

"I am in great trouble," it seemed easy, somehow, to confide in this motherly lady. "Please do not be angry with me for coming. Something has happened that I must tell Lord Tracey. I dared not risk the delay of a letter."

Mrs. Dane looked at her thoughtfully.

"He told me when he first came here he wanted to earn money and settle down as a married man. Am I speaking to his fiancée?"

"I am his wife. He meant to tell you," said Alma, fixing her blue eyes on the lady's face. "He came here on purpose. He said you and Miss Dane had been so kind to him always. He had an idea that you would want a bailiff or secretary, and that if he told you of our marriage you might perhaps give him the post."

Nancy Dane felt in as terrible a predicament as woman ever knew. She wished from the bottom of her heart she had never invited Rupert Tracey to the Croft. She acquitted him of any intentional deception. She did not accuse him of wilfully trifling with Honor's affections. Putting herself in the young lord's place, she could see that circumstances had conspired to make it very difficult for him to mention his marriage. He had gone on waiting for an opportunity, instead of boldly telling his news, and now the effect of his procrastination had brought about something akin to a tragedy. How could Honor's mother present Lady Tracey to her when the heiress hoped to bear that title herself?

"Please do not think I have taken a liberty in coming here," pleaded Alma. "I only want to see Rupert for one half-hour, and then I will go back to London. I never thought of troubling you or Miss Dane."

Then Nancy spoke. She hardly knew what to say, but she saw that the poor young wife misunderstood her silence, and was hurt by it.

"My dear," she said, gently, "do not think you are unwelcome. I am only sorry to see you in such trouble. I fear that while we have enjoyed your husband's pleasant company you have been in sorrow."

"My mother died yesterday," said Alma, brokenly. "No, do not pity me, please Mrs. Dane. Let me finish. I had been taught to believe she died when I was a little child, and all the while she was alive—an outcast from home! She died yesterday, and under circumstances which have brought a terrible notoriety to my maiden name. I couldn't bear that my husband should read it all in the newspaper. I was afraid he would be angry and not forgive me. I should never have ventured here, but that I felt I must tell him all with my own lips. I have managed one thing. No one suspects that I am his wife. The name of Tracey won't be dragged into the mire. If he is very angry I can go away and keep my marriage a secret always."

"I am sure he will not be angry," said Mrs. Dane, kindly. "I have not known Lord Tracey very long, but I have seen a great deal of him, and I am sure his heart is as tender as a woman's."

"And you will let me see him?"

"Surely, dear! You shall see him here, and tell him what you please. I will go and send him to you as soon as I hear him come in; and as I am sure you do not feel inclined

to meet another stranger, I will not ask you to be introduced to my daughter."

Kindness and prudence joined hands in the last promise. Why, she could not have explained, but Nancy Dane felt she would give a great deal to keep poor young Lady Tracey's visit a secret from Honor.

The minutes passed on. The storm broke, and Alma trembled as she listened to the peals of thunder and saw the vivid flashes of lightning. A strange presentiment of evil seized her. All through the long journey to the Croft her one thought had been, what would Rupert say when he heard her confession? But now she sat in Mrs. Dane's pretty sanctum a new fear arose. Should she ever make it to him? Would he be spared to return to the Croft, or would the thunder claim him as a victim?

"Do not tremble so," said the kind hostess. "Indeed, there is no cause for alarm. Honor knows the neighbourhood well, and she is sure to take shelter somewhere."

Alma put one hand to her heart.

"I feel it here," she said, simply. "I seem to know that trouble is coming. I shall never have a happy home with my husband. Even if he can forgive me, death will part us."

"You are too nervous," said Mrs. Dane. "But I do not wonder at your anxiety, for I am sure you are tired and overwrought. Do try and believe me, my dear. Honor and Lord Tracey are safely sheltered in some cottage, and suffering far less from the storm than we are enduring through anxiety on their account."

"Hark!" and Alma started up, "I am sure I heard the sound of horses' hoofs."

Mrs. Dane went to the window. The violence of the storm had abated now, but the rain still came down in torrents.

Alma's quick ears were right. Two horses entered up the avenue. Lord Tracey leading Honor's mare as though the mistress of the Croft had lost her nerve through the terrors of the morning.

Nancy Dane went out to meet her child; her heart aching for Honor, and a vague fear of she knew not what oppressing her.

It did not lessen as the two wanderers came to greet her. Lord Tracey was pale as death. He looked like a man overtaken by some fearful calamity which had utterly bewildered him. Honor, on the contrary, was gay and cheerful. A happy triumph glistered in her eyes as she came up to her mother and whispered,—

"You must congratulate us both, mamma. Rupert loves me, and I have promised to be his wife!"

Mrs. Dane felt as though her brain was turning. Which was she to believe? Her own child's statement, or the story of the young girl who had come from London to seek her husband? Something in Rupert's face made her repress the startled cry which had risen to her lips. Her presence of mind returned, and she said gravely,—

"You are drenched through and through, Honor. I can listen to nothing until you have let Paulina dress you in dry clothes. Please go upstairs at once."

"Yes," urged Lord Tracey, darting a look of gratitude at Mrs. Dane, "you will catch a terrible cold if you are imprudent."

Honor hesitated one moment. Then she turned away in the direction of the stairs. Lord Tracey turned to Mrs. Dane.

"I must speak to you."

"Come in here," and she led the way to the library, intending to prepare him for the visitor who waited for him in her own little sitting-room.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

Few men can have had a more painful task than the one which now devolved on Rupert. He who had been at the Croft as a honored guest had to break to Mrs. Dane that her daughter had fatally misunderstood him and promised him her hand unsought.

"I feel as if I could never forgive myself," he concluded, sadly. "I ought to have told you of my marriage directly I arrived, but I waited for an opportunity. I thought I had found it this morning, and I asked Miss Dane if she would appoint me her Bailiff. I will swear to you, her mother, I never had any thought of trifling with her affections. I know my conduct may seem blameworthy, but I never dreamed of the ill that would arise from my procrastination."

"You thought of marrying Honor once," said Mrs. Dane, gravely; "at least, I fancied so when we were at Brighton."

Rupert confessed the truth.

"In those days I believed I should never love anyone. I fancied liking and esteem sufficient foundation for married life. I was poor and proud. Mrs. Middleton introduced me to Miss Dane, and declared we were just suited to each other. But for two things, Mrs. Dane, I should have proposed to your daughter before she left Brighton, though I never dreamed I had won her heart. She was ambitious, and—"

Nancy Dane interrupted him.

"What were the things which changed your intentions, Lord Tracey?"

"One was Miss Dane's evident delight at her grandfather's death. I thought, forgive me, that a woman who could so delight in wealth would not be happy as the wife of a poor man. The other thing was your own warning."

"My warning!" cried the mother. "What can you mean?"

"You cannot have forgotten. You had tried in vain to dissuade Miss Dane from hastening here to take possession of her inheritance. She had gone to get ready, and then, with tears in your eyes, you turned to me and told me 'never to do evil that good might come.' I knew then you had guessed my thoughts, and meant to warn me not to marry without love for the sake of preserving my ancestral home."

Nancy Dane trembled like a woman smitten by a sudden blow.

"You misunderstood me," she said, slowly. "It is too late now to explain my meaning. We must think of the future, not the past, Lord Tracey. We must tell Honor the truth at once, for your wife is now in this house!"

"My wife! What can have brought her here? She promised to wait until I returned to claim her!"

"She is in sore distress, poor girl. Some terrible tragedy has occurred in her family, and she could not bear to think you might read of it first in the paper. She seems almost frightened, poor little thing, that you may regret your marriage. She has told no one she is your wife, and says, sorrowfully, if you are angry she can go away and keep the secret always."

"I must go to her."

"One moment," said Mrs. Dane, anxiously; "what am I to say to Honor?"

Lord Tracey coloured like a girl.

"Tell her I regret my fatal silence from the bottom of my heart. I will go away at once, Mrs. Dane. I will never cross your daughter's path again, and I will never breathe to anyone, not even to my own wife, the terrible mistake my procrastination has brought about."

Mrs. Dane sighed.

"I will take you to Lady Tracey. I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life; but I am afraid I must not ask you to stay here, even for to-night. You see it is Honor's house, and—"

"And my presence here is an intrusion. Indeed, I feel it so. I will take Alma away at once."

"You cannot take her through this dreadful rain. And I would not for worlds you should attempt it. I will order the brougham for the three o'clock train. Please don't think me ungenerous. I think I understand all that has happened, and it is partly my fault for throwing you so much with Honor. Tell

Lady Tracey I will try and come to say good-bye to her, but that I dare not risk a meeting between her and my daughter."

Alma looked up with a yearning eagerness in her beautiful eyes, as her husband came into Mrs. Danes' little sitting-room. He spoke no word of reproach, nothing in his voice or manner could tell his wife how terribly she had added to his difficulties. He opened his arms and strained her to his heart before he even asked a question.

"Mrs. Dane spoke of some trouble which had brought you here, sweetheart. Tell me everything and let me help you."

"Oh, Rue, forgive me!" she pleaded, with a bitter cry. "Forgive me, or you will break my heart."

He was tenderness itself to her. He would as soon have been harsh to a little child as to Alma. How thankful he felt in days to come that he had been so gentle to his girl-wife.

"Tell me everything, Alma," he urged, fondly. "Dear what can have happened to trouble you so?"

Alma Tracey looked bravely into her husband's face. Surely her confession blotted out many an act of folly which had marred her youth.

"I deceived you, Rupert! I told you Sir Kenneth Dane was a disagreeable tyrant. I let you think he was so proud. I said we were not friends while he lived under my aunt's roof. It was not true: we were lovers, and I jilted him last June!"

"Alma!"

The misery in the voice touched her as her own sorrow had been powerless to do.

"It is quite true," she whispered; "but I never loved him, Rue. I was afraid of him. I never knew what love was like until I met you."

He pressed her hand tightly in his own.

"Why have you come to tell me this, Alma? Dear, keep nothing back. Let there be no secrets between us."

She told him all: her mother's crime and death.

"I know now why Aunt Bertram never loved me. She thought I was too like my mother—that I should be a bad wife as she was. Rue, if you are afraid, let me go away. No one knows our secret. I would rather never bear your name, never see your face again, even, than live at your side and know your love had left me."

"It will never leave you, darling," he said, pressing her to his heart, "never. I own I would rather have been your first choice; but, Alma, love like mine can't change. I would rather have you as you are than lose you; and, dear, I can't forget—I never can forget—it was you yourself who told me your secret."

"I used to be so frightened," she said, simply, "lest I should be made miserable myself through love, because I had trampled on Sir Kenneth's. But, Rue, I saw his cousin last night—May Dane—and she is a nobler woman than I could ever have been. He will marry her and be happy, and I—I am your wife."

"My wife and my love," he answered, fondly, "now and ever. Alma, I have been talking to Mrs. Dane, and she agrees with me that I had better take you home this afternoon. She will excuse an abrupt leave-taking. Dear, we may be poor, but for the future we will be together. I shall tell your aunt the truth this very night, and from this day forward everyone shall know that you are my wife!"

"But my mother! Rue, are you not ashamed?"

"She loved you," he said, gravely. "It was for your sake she sinned. I shall remember that, Alma; and, dear, you are not accountable for her faults. If the shadow of her crime falls on you, I will bear my half. We will share everything, my Alma, henceforward."

"I am quite happy now."

She was in his arms, her fair head pillowed on his breast.

Rupert Tracey had felt the blow Alma's revelation gave him very keenly, but it never changed his love. He had wooed her, not expecting to find her perfection. He could not thrust her from his heart because he discovered she was not an angel but a woman.

No one could possibly have misunderstood their attitude. His strong arms supporting her, the perfect confidence with which she rested in his embrace, told their own story: those two were lovers.

Rupert Tracey looked down upon Alma with a fond adoration shining in his eyes. Never had he so looked upon another woman—never.

"Traitor! deceiver! villain!"

The words were hissed rather than spoken. Lord Tracey looked up and saw Honor Dane bending over them!

When she entered the room, he could not tell. She must have approached stealthily with velvet, panther-like tread, and now she was so near him that he could feel her hot breath fanning his cheek.

Rupert was a brave man; but a strange fear assailed him now. He had never seen a face so transfigured with rage as Honor's was now. He had never in his life seen eyes so full of hatred as hers.

"He belongs to me!" cried the heiress, passionately. "I shall be his wife, and you can go and starve! Isn't it enough that your presence hantts my home?—that every one wishes me evil because I fill your place? Must you steal my husband as for long years you stole my home? I always knew, if we came face to face, evil would come of it. The two Miss Danes could not meet without."

The truth broke on Rupert. Honor mistook his wife for May Dane. Her brain, unhinged by frantic passion and fierce anger, was deceived by the faint, shadowy resemblance which Alma undoubtedly bore to the girl who had once made the sunshine of Dane's Croft.

Honor had seen May once only in the gloaming. She believed firmly that she saw her now, and that her hated kinswoman had deprived her of her lover.

Rupert was standing close to the bell. He pulled it frantically, and then he stood still with his arms wound round his wife. He feared to speak or move, lest he should arouse the fury of the enemy so near her.

That Honor was unaccountable for her actions he felt sure. He dared not grapple with her, lest he should be overpowered and leave Alma at her mercy.

She stood between them and the door, quite cutting off their retreat. His only hope was that help would come in answer to his wild pealing of the bell. But oh! how long—very long—the minutes seemed.

Honor stared at them both with the sullen fury of a wild beast, then she rushed towards Alma.

Lord Tracey seized her arm, and tried to gain possession of the strange, foreign looking weapon which, to his horror, he saw glittering in her hand.

(To be continued.)

SUPPOSING that you wished to walk through all the streets and lanes and alleys of London, and were able to arrange your trip so that you never traversed the same one twice, you would have to walk ten miles every day for nine years before your journey would be completed.

PRUSSIC acid, which in a mild way is used to flavour sweets, and is a very common medicine, is never sold by chemists except diluted with fifty times its own quantity of water. The pure acid is such a deadly poison, that supposing a small bottle of it were broken in the centre of a crowded theatre, only those nearest the door would escape with their lives. Inhalation of the fumes alone would be sufficient to cause instant death.

## HER FATHER'S SECRET.

### CHAPTER II.—(continued.)

"Let me see," said Jacob Jasper, reflexively, "you want—how much?"

"Two thousand pounds!"

"Two thousand pounds! Why, last week, you said one thousand, Sir Hugh!"

"I know it, but every day since then has increased my needs. An army of bills has poured in, some of them so pressing that I hardly dare leave the house lest I should be arrested. The last horse I bought—Highflyer, you know—died on my hands the other day, and the dealer declares he must have his pay for him immediately. There's a dead loss of three hundred pounds. I am really in a great strait, and I shan't mind the amount of interest—only I must have the money!"

The young Baronet spoke earnestly and vehemently, and the usurer compressed his lips and assumed an air of deeper thoughtfulness.

"The money-market is tight just now, Sir Hugh," he began.

"So you always say!" interrupted the Baronet, impatiently. "Let us come to business at once!"

"Well, then, Sir Hugh, to come to business, I don't see how I can oblige you. You want a large sum, a very large sum, considering how much you owe me already. To lend you any more would be to expose myself to certain danger of loss, and that of course is out of the question," and the money-lender tried to smile. "You are living at an awful rate, for a young man without family. Why don't you cut short your expenses somewhere?"

"I did not come here to receive a lecture," returned the young Baronet, who had evidently not relinquished all hope of obtaining what he sought, and who therefore repressed his haughty distaste for his words.

"True, Sir Hugh," said the money-lender, "but, you know, the borrower is servant to him that lendeth," and again he smiled. "I am looking out for my own interests now. You ought to retrench—sell off your horses and things—"

"If I were to sell them all, I should not get nearly enough to pay my debts," replied the young Baronet, gloomily. "I am sometimes inclined," he added, speaking more to himself than the usurer, "to go home to Hawk's Nest and settle down into a hamdrum life. I am almost weary of this sort of existence!"

"It would be the best thing in the world you could do!" declared the usurer deliberately. "If you would go home and economize, you might in time retrieve your mistakes, and put your property where it was two years ago—though, of course, that is nothing to me!"

"I suppose not!" and Sir Hugh's tone was slightly ironical. "But I can't go without the money, Jacob Jasper. I can't leave all my debts behind me, you know. Granting that my creditors would let me leave town, my name would be bandied about in a way that I could never endure. Of course, you were not serious in refusing me the loan. Think how much money I have paid you for interest—"

"And think of what you owe me at present. Think how you are running through your property, and how soon you will be a beggar!"

Sir Hugh started, an angry flush kindled on his fair cheeks, and he was about to utter a haughty response, when his face suddenly paled, and he covered his face with his hands.

The usurer's words had struck home!

He had never thought of his folly and extravagance as he had done that day, when alternating between hopes and fears as to the result of his proposed interview with the usurer. In his extremity he had applied to his gay friends for a loan of the money he required, and, to his astonishment, not one of



them had granted his request, not one of them had listened to the story of his embarrassments, into which they had helped to plunge him, not with even friendly sympathy.

There was nothing more to be gained from him, and so they left him to his fate.

There was, therefore, under his mask of carelessness, during his interview with the usurer, a disgust of the world, a reckless hatred of mankind, and a feeling of hopelessness that was akin to despair.

"Well," he said, at last, lifting his head, "you won't lose anything by me, Jasper—you've taken care of that. As to this loan, it will be safe enough. There are my expectations, you know—"

"From whom, Sir Hugh?" quietly inquired the money-lender.

"Why, from my great-aunt, Miss Chellis. She is eighty years old, and can't last much longer," and the young Baronet's cheeks flashed with sudden shame at his own words and thought. "She is immensely rich, you know," he added, more hurriedly. "Her godmother left her a splendid fortune, and it's sure to come to me!"

"Not quite so sure, Sir Hugh," replied the usurer. "The truth is," and he changed his position in order to obtain a better view of his visitor's face, "I asked for a little delay last week about this loan in order to find out your standing with Miss Chellis. I sent a man down to Hawk's Nest—"

"You did! Well?"

"He made a few inquiries in a quiet way, and discovered that Miss Chellis had heard of your goings on in London, and was very angry about them, and about your not having been to see her for a year. She has declared her intention to leave all she has to found a mission, or some such thing, and, as near as my man could find out, her new will is made, leaving you only enough to buy a mourning ring!"

The young Baronet's blue eyes shone with a wild light, and his pale face deepened in its expression of recklessness. He strove to conceal the wound he had received, but his sudden trembling betrayed him.

"Then it seems I am ruined!" he said, after a pause, trying to laugh, but failing lamentably. "Well, I am not the first who has been ruined, or who has learned the fact in this room of yours. Ruined!"

The money-lender was too much accustomed to witness the despair of his visitors to particularly heed that of Sir Hugh, so, in a business tone, he said,—

"There's one way to get out of your trouble, Sir Hugh, and only one that I can see. You ought to marry a rich wife."

"Rich wives generally require rich husbands," returned Sir Hugh, with a wild laugh. "So you utterly decline the loan, Jasper?"

"Utterly," was the firm reply. "I can't lend you a shilling more, and you won't find a broker in the city who will accept any security you may offer. Our business is concluded, I suppose?"

Accepting the hint, the young Baronet arose and endeavoured to assume a nonchalant air, although his step was almost tottering, as he moved towards the door.

He made some slight remark, scarcely conscious of what he said, bade the money-lender good evening, and passed out through the office, shivering with painful sensitiveness from the glance of the bookkeeper.

He did not breathe freely until he had gained the street.

And then he paused by the window to recover his calmness and comprehend his situation. His wild gaze fell upon the pile of wealth behind its secure iron grating, and he thought feverishly of how much good that money would do him, and how much he had squandered in things that were worse than useless.

"Oh, if I could only live it all over again!" he murmured. "No money, no friends, no

hope! I am indeed bankrupt. Ruined—ruined—"

He paused as his now wandering gaze fell upon a delicate, womanly figure standing near him. He saw that the face was veiled, and that it was turned towards the display in the window, but he was also aware that, unless she were deaf, she must have heard his words.

Without bestowing another glance upon her he turned and strode down the street.

He had proceeded but a short distance, when he became conscious that the woman was following him, that at one moment she was at his side, scanning his face from behind her thick veil, and at the next she had fallen behind him, as though overcome with timidity.

Annoyed at the incident, Sir Hugh stopped abruptly in a quiet and retired part of the street, upon the side least traversed, and turned upon his follower, exclaiming,—

"Do you wish to speak to me, madam?"

The veiled figure seemed to shrink within itself at this demand, but, after a brief hesitation, a timid, hurried, but musical voice said,—

"I—I beg your pardon, sir, but are you married?"

Sir Hugh stared at the woman on hearing this singular question, but he was too thoroughly depressed to long indulge in his feeling of surprise.

"No, I am not married, thank heaven!" he exclaimed, with his usual recklessness.

"Are you engaged to be married?" persisted the questioner, her voice fluttering with increasing timidity.

Making up his mind that his singular acquaintance had received an injury at some period to her intellectual faculties, Sir Hugh replied,—

"No, madam, I am not even engaged to be married."

"You will think my conduct very strange," said the fluttering voice, "and I am afraid it is really so. You have a good face, a kind face, and you are evidently a gentleman. Yes, I will trust you," and the voice grew stronger and more determined. "I heard what you said to yourself at the window yonder, and I conclude you are in need of money."

"In great need of money, madam," returned the young Baronet, determined to humour the supposed lunatic, simply because her singular behaviour and words diverted his mind from himself. "I have run through 'a fine property,' as a particular friend of mine has just informed me, and I am about to devote a little time to the consideration of the best means of ridding myself of an existence which—"

"Is it so bad as that?" asked the veiled lady, a thrill of hope and joy running through her voice. "Why do you not marry a rich wife?"

"Because, madam, rich wives are not to be had for the wishing; besides, a lady might very naturally object to marry a poor man and then to pay off his debts."

"Yes—but if a rich lady would do so?"

"I would marry her at once," declared Sir Hugh, in a tone of exaggerated politeness.

"I have a proposition to make to you," said the lady, with gathering agitation. "But first—your name?"

"Sir Hugh Chellis!"

The veiled lady started on hearing the name, and said, hurriedly,—

"My proposition is this: Circumstances demand that I should be married before three more days elapse. I have no suitors, and I am obliged to select a husband for myself, unmaidenly as such a course may seem. I am wealthy, and would bestow upon you at the altar ten thousand pounds, with forty thousand pounds additional three days hence. Will you marry me?"

To say that Sir Hugh was astonished at this proposition would be to understate his emotion. He was amazed—all the more so because there was a calmness and collectedness of manner about the veiled lady that put to flight his hastily conceived idea that she was insane.

"Our marriage would be a marriage but in name," continued the lady, anxiously. "We should separate at the altar, and never look upon each other's faces again. I should make that my first stipulation. Do you consent?"

"Really, this is such an unprecedented affair!" said the bewildered young Baronet. "I know nothing about you, madam: and, pardon me, the ladies of our name have always been—"

"Ladies of position you would say!" remarked the veiled lady as he found himself unable to finish the sentence. "I don't doubt it, but I am not less so than they."

She spoke with such a proud accent as carried conviction into the soul of Sir Hugh.

"I suppose then," he said, awkwardly, "you are very ugly?"

"You shall see for yourself!" was her response.

They were standing not far distant from a gas-lamp, and she suddenly flung back her veil and revealed her face to him.

Sir Hugh uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

For she was marvellously beautiful, with eyes of midnight blackness, black hair, a marble-like complexion, a delicate aquiline nose, and with a lovely tender mouth.

There was nothing but purity and goodness, except melancholy, expressed in that charming face, and, looking at her, even the experienced young man felt that he could have sworn to her innocence and worthiness to become his bride.

She drew down her veil before he had time to fix even one feature in his mind, and said,—

"Think, Sir Hugh; you should have fifty thousand pounds—ten thousand before our marriage. We should never meet again on earth, and I would even consent never to bear your name. All that I ask, therefore, would be that you should meet me to-morrow morning at St. Mary's Church, near here, going there alone, with a special license, when we could be married, and go our separate ways. Do you consent?"

Sir Hugh hesitated but a moment. This unprecedented offer seemed to him a direct interposition from heaven in his favour, and he accepted it as such. He informed the veiled lady that he consented to her terms, swore to observe them faithfully, and declared that he should not fail to keep the appointment. He had scarcely finished when the unknown disappeared in the deepening gloom, and he continued his route homeward, his senses in a whirl, and only half conscious that he was engaged to marry in a few hours a woman he had never seen before, whose name he did not know, and whose being was wrapped in impenetrable mystery.

### CHAPTER III.

Married in league, coupled and link'd together,  
With all religious strength of sacred vows.

King John.

NEAR the heart of the busy city, standing in a retired and narrow street, was the little church indicated by the mysterious lady who had offered so strangely to become the wife of Sir Hugh Chellis. It was overshadowed by tall buildings on every side, and was but an humble-looking little edifice, though the time had been when the rustling of silk had been heard in its aisles; prosperous tradesmen with their portly wives and large families had filled the great high-backed pews, and the lofty old-fashioned double pulpit had been occupied by a popular young clergyman. A deaf old curate officiated there now, and his congregation consisted of the superannuated pew-opener, and a few old people who had worshipped between its gray walls in their youth, and who would not give up the time-honoured practice now.

Upon the morning subsequent to the scenes detailed in the preceding chapter the door of the church stood slightly ajar, and there was

a faint sound from within of sweeping and dusting. The old pew-opener, with a look of pleased interest on her grim face, moved about polishing the chancel railing, brushing the worn carpet, and endeavouring to put a better face upon everything. At length all was finished to her liking, the dusts and brushes concealed in a seldom-used pew, and she seated herself upon the pulpit steps, and looked expectantly towards the door.

"It's a long, long time since there's been a wedding here," she muttered. "I never was so took aback in my life as when that handsome young gentleman came to me this morning and told me to open the church and be secret as death about it. He gave me a guinea too to keep the secret, because he didn't want any strangers in here. Well, things do happen curious sometimes."

It was already past nine; the curate now made his appearance, and expressed his surprise that the young couple, whom he had been summoned to unite at that hour, had not arrived; he then passed into the vestry, followed by his clerk—a man much older than himself.

It was nearly ten when Sir Hugh Chellis stole into the dim aisle, his attire a sort of compromise between the ordinary street dress and bridal garments. He wore a black frock coat, but a white waistcoat and gloves. The latter he drew on after entering the edifice.

He looked relieved to find that his bride was not awaiting him, and said something to the old woman to the effect that he had had some difficulty and delay in procuring a special license, but that everything was now in readiness so far as he was concerned.

His face was pale, and the usually reckless expression of his features occasionally gave place to a look of extreme seriousness and gravity. He had begun to think of the strange adventure he had entered upon, but he had decided to pursue it to the end.

His affairs within the last twelve hours had assumed an aspect of desperation.

He had returned to his chambers in a kind of maze on the preceding evening, but had been aroused from it on discovering a pile of bills which awaited him. He glanced them over wearily, noted the threatening tone of his creditors, and congratulated himself upon the mysterious good fortune awaiting him on the morrow.

And then it suddenly occurred to him that he would probably fail in procuring a special license unless he were able to give the name of his intended bride.

For an hour or two he pondered over this dilemma, but the same idea had evidently occurred to the heroine of his adventure, for the postman, on his last round, brought him two letters, one of which bore the city mark, and was from the mysterious lady.

Sir Hugh examined the missive curiously before opening it. The post-mark showed that it had been posted at the station nearest to the place where they had met.

"It must be from her!" was his unspoken thought. "She stepped into a stationer's on her way home. The appearance of the letter, though, affords no clue to her identity!"

He opened the envelope and hastened to read the enclosed note. It was brief, written in a clear, delicate hand, evidently disguised, and ran as follows,—

"SIR HUGH,—

"I forgot that my name might be necessary in procuring the license. I am,"

"ADAM HOLME!"

"Is she indeed?" Sir Hugh remarked, ironically, the name being utterly strange to his ears. "I am happy to know it, however. She might have had a worse name. Now let me see who is my other correspondent."

The second letter was dated at Hawk's Nest, and bore the signature of Dorothy Chellis, his great-aunt. After the communication made to him by the nether, Sir Hugh

was not surprised at the contents of the epistle. First his kinswoman reproached him for being a spendthrift and a disgrace to his ancient and honourable name, and then informed him that he need no longer consider himself her heir, as she had made another will, leaving her fortune to found a new African mission.

This letter worked up the mind of the young man to a wilder recklessness than he had ever before evinced. This supported him throughout the preparations necessary for his intended marriage on the following morning, and did not once desert him until he had entered the little church. There the dim light or the sepulchral air partly sobered him, but he had no wish to retreat from his compact with the unknown.

His old life, full of false friendships, debts, and stunted resources, could not tempt him to break his faith with her. He said to himself, let her be who and what she would, she offered him a fortune which he would be foolish not to accept.

He turned from the old pew-opener and walked up and down the narrow aisles, between the rows of high-backed pews, apparently engaged in examining the quaint windows with their tiny panes of stained glass, and pausing now and then before a memorial window which was the pride and delight of the old woman's heart.

But he was not thinking of the art of glass-staining, nor admiring the memorial window. He was trying to evade a thought that would intrude itself upon his mind—a doubt of the lady who sought to become his bride.

Perhaps she had done some wrong and sought to hide her identity under his name. But no, that could not be, as she had offered never to call herself by the name his mother had borne. Perhaps she was a criminal, an adventurer—but no, her face was too pure and innocent to allow of such suspicions.

Sir Hugh tried to recall her features, but the effort was vain. The light of the street lamp had been so dim, his mind had been in such an excited and despairing state, the glimpse she had afforded him of her face had been so brief, that it was no wonder that he retained only a vague impression that she was very dark and very beautiful.

"I wonder what my good Aunt Dorothy would say if she could see her graceless nephew now," he mused, bitterly, as he strode up and down. "She has frequently urged me to marry, so I am only about to act upon her advice. She is terribly proud, and I wonder whether she would be charmed with her niece-in-law elect."

Then his thoughts reverted to his prospective bride. Had she ever seen him before the previous evening and fallen in love with him? He decided in the negative, not being a vain man, and her conduct also contradicting the supposition.

Suddenly a thought flashed upon his mind that dyed his cheek with scarlet and raised an indignant expression in his blue eyes.

Perhaps—such was his thought—the whole affair had been a practical joke upon him—a trick of some of his late friends. They might be waiting outside to jeer at him upon his egress, or they might enter at any moment with a host of his fashionable friends.

He began nervously to strip off his white gloves, and was about to button his coat over his spotters waistcoat, when the church door hurriedly opened and shut, and two women came down the aisle.

Both were veiled, yet it was easy to see that one was mistress and the other servant.

The mistress was in advance, but her movements were marked by a delicacy and timidity that appealed favourably to the expectant bridegroom. She wore a white bonnet, with a thick white veil that concealed her features as effectually as a mask could have done. She was wrapped in a long dark circular cloak that covered her form from throat to feet.

The servant was plainly dressed, and

carried, half hidden by her shawl, a small square box or casket.

Somewhat reassured by the appearance of the lady and the casket, Sir Hugh drew on his gloves again, and advanced from the gloom, just as the lady uttered a low cry of dismay at not seeing him.

"Good-morning, madam," said the young Baronet, bowing profoundly.

"Good-morning, Sir Hugh," was the response, in the same fluttering voice that had arrested him on the previous evening. "Have you the license? Is everything ready?"

"Yes, madam," and Sir Hugh exhibited the special license. "The clergyman and his clerk are waiting in the vestry."

"Don't let her call them just yet," returned the mysterious lady as the pew-opener arose from her seat on the pulpit stairs. "I have something first to say to you."

Sir Hugh gave the necessary directions to the old woman, who repeated herself. The maid then withdrew to the memorial window at the farther end of the church, quite out of the reach of observation, and thither her mistress and Sir Hugh followed her.

The maid deposited the casket she carried upon a bench, and stepped into the background, where she kept a vigilant watch upon the door. The mistress turned towards the young Baronet and said,—

"I need not ask if you have repented your hasty promise of last evening, Sir Hugh. Your presence here, your dress, the license you showed me, everything shows that you have decided to keep your word with me. I do not feel that I am wronging you in this marriage, for the money you gain with me will pay off your debts and give you a handsome start in life. But I want to hear from your lips now that you will never think reproachfully of me in time to come for thus binding you in marriage to one whom you will never see again. You may love someone—"

"No, madam," interrupted the young Baronet. "I have never loved and have no expectation of ever loving. The knowledge that I am not free will be a perpetual security against any such catastrophe."

"And you will promise me," said the lady, "that you will never seek to claim me—that should you ever meet me anywhere you will not even speak to me unless I first address you?"

"I promise," declared Sir Hugh, emphatically.

The veiled lady was thoughtful a moment, and then said, hesitatingly,—

"With regard to the money, Sir Hugh, I shall keep my promise to the letter. Three days hence you shall have the remaining forty thousand pounds. But this morning I—I haven't the whole ten thousand—"

Sir Hugh's face expressed the thought that after all she was an adventurer. He was about to tell her so, and to anathematize himself for having been foolish enough to believe her, when she drew a key from her watch-chain and inserted it in the lock of the casket.

"I have a part of the sum," she said, quietly, having read his face, "and can give security for the rest. But the morning was late here, and that you would be gone."

She lifted the lid of the casket, and Sir Hugh beheld a thin pile of bank-notes. She handed it to him and he ran them over, seeing that they were really genuine, and comprised a small fortune.

"You have five thousand pounds in your hands, Sir Hugh," said the mysterious lady, "and here is security for the remaining half of the promised sum!"

She withdrew a tray from the casket and revealed an inner tray, upon which reposed a set of jewels of rare beauty and value. It comprised a necklace, bracelets, brooch, pendants for the ears, and a spray for the hair. The jewels were of the finest brilliants, as clear as crystal, and all of good size, some of them being princely gems.

Sir Hugh was a judge of fine gems, and his



eyes involuntarily sparkled at the sight of these."

"These are worth more than five thousand pounds, madam," he said.

"You are right, Sir Hugh," she answered. "They are mine, and I beg you to accept them as security for the payment of what I promised to-day. I will redeem them in three days."

The young Baronet bowed assent, and took the necklace in his hands. It was well but plainly set, but there was no mark about it that could serve as a clue to the identity of its owner, of whom he only knew the name.

"I accede to your wishes, madam," he said, putting the flashing *rivière* back upon its rose-coloured bed. "I am now ready for the ceremony, if you are. It is eleven o'clock, and we may be interrupted."

The lady started nervously, glanced at the door, and then hurriedly locked the casket, giving Sir Hugh the key.

He put it in his pocket with the bank-notes. The maid had, at the glance of her mistress, turned the key in the lock of the church door, and she now came forward and divested the lady of her disguising cloak.

The unknown was thus revealed in complete bridal attire. She had a slender, queenly figure, which was now half shrouded by her long, clinging veil, which had not yet been lifted from her face. Her robe was of heavy white silk and fell in thick folds from her delicate waist, sweeping behind her in a train.

"Had you not better put aside your veil, madam?" inquired the expectant bridegroom, somewhat awkwardly, full of impatience to behold her face.

"It is better not," she answered. "We are not to meet again, you know."

Sir Hugh acquiesced in her decision, and gave her his arm. She laid her hand lightly upon it and they advanced towards the chancel, where they were awaited by the curate, in full canonicals, and his clerk.

The maid followed them bearing the casket, which still contained the jewels.

The pew-opener stationed herself near the follower of the mysterious lady, eager to get a glimpse of the veiled face of the bride, and full of intense excitement about the strange marriage.

The curate commenced the marriage service, speaking in low, uneven tones, which were, however, very distinct, and the bride and bridegroom listened, both of them with excitement and agitation.

The old clerk took upon himself the office of giving away the bride.

As the curate demanded of Sir Hugh if he took "this woman for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse," &c., the young Baronet's wildness and recklessness left him, and he became suddenly and thoroughly sobered.

To whom was he selling himself? he asked, in his heart. Who and what was this mysterious being whom he was falsely promising to love and to cherish till death did them part?

But retreat was now impossible.

It was a strange bridal and a strange scene. The dim and deserted old church, with its time-stained walls, its quaint, small windows, old-fashioned pulpit and pews, seemed transplanted from a former century; and the young kneeling couple, the face of the one pale and troubled, that of the other veiled completely, presented a picture not often paralleled.

It was over at last.

The mysterious unknown, whoever, and whatever she had been, was now Lady Chellis by every law—human or divine. She wore upon her finger the bridal ring, placed there by Sir Hugh, her husband only in name, her husband whom she had stipulated she was never to see again.

As they arose from their knees the maid rushed forward, clasped her mistress's hand, and whispered,—

"I congratulate you, my lady—"

"Hush!" returned her mistress, with a

warning glance at the anxious face of the bridegroom. "I know what you would say, Ellen, but it must not be said here!"

The clerk reminded Lady Chellis at this juncture that the register was to be signed, and she took her bridegroom's arm, and followed his guidance.

The names were written, those of the witnesses subscribed, and the register was put away under lock and key. But before it had disappeared Sir Hugh had carelessly glanced over the page and learned that the maid, one of the witnesses—the other being the pew-opener—was named Ellen Thomas.

Those two names—Adah Holis and Ellen Thomas—were all he knew of his bride and her confidential attendant.

The curate received a handsome fee from the bridegroom, as did the clerk, and they then retired to the vestry.

Lady Chellis took from her maid the casket, and placed it in the hands of Sir Hugh.

"In three days, she said, 'you shall hear from me again. I believe we have nothing more to say to each other?'"

"Nothing, unless you deem it proper to tell me something about yourself," said Sir Hugh. "Remember that you are now my wife, and I don't even know who you are!"

"It is best so," she returned, her voice having an undertone of sadness. "Do you think, Sir Hugh, that I would reveal to you my identity, after the circumstances of our marriage? No—never. Forget me, or at least do not think harshly of me!"

She turned, as if to depart, but her maid whispered, shrilly,—

"My lady—the certificate—"

"True! I had nearly forgotten!" exclaimed the bride. "Sir Hugh, I must have proofs of our marriage—a certificate signed by the curate and the witnesses!"

"You shall have it," was the reply, and Sir Hugh made his way to the vestry.

During his absence the maid cloaked her mistress, partially concealed the long white veil, and effectually disguised her.

"How well it's passed off, my lady!" she exclaimed, with undisguised joy. "I never dreamed that we should have such splendid success! You have got a handsome husband, my lady. I was afraid last night when you went out that you would only succeed in getting some old or ugly, or low-born man for a husband. You know you said you would get one, let him be what he might. But this Sir Hugh is handsome and young. Money will do anything, won't it?"

"Yes, money will do anything!" said the bride, wearily. "It has bought the name of Lady Chellis for me. I pray Sir Hugh may never repent the marriage, nor curse me!"

"It won't matter," remarked the maid, naively. "Your ladyship won't know it if he does. Ah! They are beckoning me to come and sign!"

She obeyed the summons, the pew-opener accompanying her and the bride followed them to the vestry.

The certificate of marriage was soon filled out in due form, signed, and passed into the keeping of the veiled lady, who concealed it under her cloak.

The little party then separated, the bride, bridegroom, and veiled attendant making their way to the door.

On reaching it they paused.

"We separate here, Sir Hugh," said Lady Chellis. "We shall never meet again, but I shall always feel an interest in your welfare. As you have not forbidden me to do so, I may some time assume your name, should such a step be advantageous to me, but rest assured I shall never do ought to sully it. And now—farewell!"

She extended her small gloved hand, and Sir Hugh pressed it in his own.

"Farewell, madam!" he said. "I am much obliged to you, for your kind interest in my future. Whoever you are I wish you well. Again, farewell!"

He released her hand, opened the door, and escorted her into the street.

The cab in which she had arrived was in waiting. She entered it, her maid followed, and the vehicle drove away, the mysterious bride bowing a last adieu.

Sir Hugh had intended to listen to the address given by the veiled lady, but, as she gave none, he signalled a passing cab, sprang in, and directed the driver to follow that which contained the lady, and which was now disappearing behind the nearest corner.

The promise of a handsome reward stimulated the driver to exert every effort, and the utmost speed was exacted of his horse.

They traversed street after street, the driver keeping the other cab in sight most of the time, and Sir Hugh, with his casket on his knees, now and then looked from the window to assure himself that the track had not been lost.

It was lost at last, however. In one of the busiest streets, where the vehicles were obliged to move more slowly by reason of their great number, the driver suddenly informed Sir Hugh that the cab he followed was quite empty, and that the lady must have been set down at some corner before the pursuers had gained it.

"By this time, sir," he added, "the lady's took another cab, I make no doubt—"

"Very well!" interrupted Sir Hugh, impatient and disappointed, "take me home then!"

He gave the address, and was driven home. He gave himself a little time to muse upon the strange events of the morning—events that were destined to alter the whole current of his life—he then changed his attire, and set out to discharge some of his debts with a portion of the money he had obtained in exchange for his liberty.

#### CHAPTER IV.

I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond;  
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond;  
Thou callest me dog before thou hadst a cause;  
But since I am a dog, beware my fangs.

*Merchant of Venice.*

As that startling knock resounded throughout the mansion of Edencourt, Sir Allyn Dare sprang to his feet, quivering and reeling, took a rapid step forward, and then, with a wall of agony and despair, he fell heavily backwards upon the lounge.

Ilde sprang to his side, raising his head in her hands, and saw that he had fainted.

An appalled look gathered on her young face as she seized a carafe of water from a table, and commenced bathing the pallid features of her parent.

That startling knock, which had marked the culminating point of the long days and weeks of mental anguish endured by the Baronet—that menacing knock was repeated!

Ilde knew that the servants of the household had all retired, Sir Allyn having dismissed them earlier in the evening than was his custom. She knew also that the outer door was unfastened, her father having personally unlocked it, and withdrawn the bolts, after dismissing his servants.

She accordingly realized that the visitor could enter without invitation, if he were so disposed, or if, as everything led her to think, he was expected, and had an appointment at that hour, however strange the fact, with the Baronet.

An instant later, as Ilde had almost expected, she heard the outer door open and close, and the quiet but assured footsteps of the visitor resounded in the hall, advancing towards the apartment in which she was with her father.

Full of painful interest and apprehension, wondering at all the events of the night, trembling with the flood of emotions they had awakened in her soul, she suddenly sprang to her feet, threw open the door of the room, and drew herself up in front of the unconscious

Baronet, with the air of a lioness turning upon its pursuers.

The next instant the visitor advanced from the hall into the apartment.

He was a man of perhaps forty years, although he looked much younger. His appearance lacked the gentleness and refinement that distinguished Sir Allyn Dare, and seeing the two together a keen observer must have concluded that the bond uniting them involved no common mystery.

He was not tall, but his figure made up in breadth what it lacked in length. He had a large, florid face, close-shaven, shaded by black hair. His countenance was singularly impressive and impenetrable. He had a cat-like softness of manner, evidently habitual to him; but under that softness it could be seen was hidden the fierceness, the pitilessness, and the cruelty of the untamed tiger of the jungle.

He glided into the room with noiseless movements, and advanced towards the couch whereon Sir Allyn was lying.

As his eyes rested upon the unconscious Baronet a baleful light flashed from them. The next instant they rested upon the maiden, wandered slowly over her lovely face, and then he bowed and said,—

"Ah! Sir Allyn's daughter."

As she encountered the glance of his cold, dull eyes Ilde felt a thrill of fear and repulsion creep over her, and, shrinking closer to her father's side, resolved to protect him from one whom her instinct assured her to be a deadly and dangerous enemy both to Sir Allyn and herself.

"You have an engagement with my father?" she demanded, haughtily, her whole soul rising up against the intruder.

"Yes, I suppose I am expected. Hark!"

He lifted his forefinger impressively, as the clock struck the hour of midnight. The sound was echoed by the great house-clock that stood in the court, and they had barely ceased when the chimes of the distant village clock floated up from the valley.

A strange smile, as he listened to these sounds, flitted over the face of the intruder, but it quickly vanished, leaving his face as impassive and impenetrable as before.

"Twelve o'clock, Miss Dare," he said, in his soft, oily tones, that struck a chill to the maiden's heart. "I arrived before twelve, you will be kind enough to remember."

Ilde inclined her head coldly, and bent over her father, bathing his face again.

"As you see," she said, "he is unconscious. He fainted on hearing your knock."

"It does not matter, so far as our appointment is concerned," returned the intruder, with a disagreeable smile. "I can wait."

He folded his arms across his broad breast, and looked quietly down upon the white rigid face of Sir Allyn, occasionally diverting his gaze towards the pale, anxious girl, who now and then looked up from her task of restoring her father and returned his glance with one of unconscious defiance.

The fat, puffy figure of the intruder, with its still movements, his oily manner, and expression of his dull eyes, and his cat-like softness of demeanour, added to his arrival at that late hour, the strange conduct of her father throughout the evening and at the moment of the knocking—all conspired to invest this mysterious personage in the mind of the young girl with all the attributes of wickedness and terror.

As she bent over Sir Allyn, chafing his hands and bathing his face, she remembered how he had desired her so recently to drink the poisoned wine, and the conviction flashed upon her mind that her destiny was in some way interwoven with that of the strange visitor, and that her father's anguish had been more for her than himself.

That there was some terrible secret in the life of the Baronet she had long believed, and that that secret was in some way connected with this midnight intruder was evidenced by

the agitation which had culminated in Sir Allyn's swoon.

While her hands flitted over the face of her father she thought of all these things, and resolved that she would be the defender and protector of her dear and noble parent, whose only faults were his timidity and weakness of will.

"Whatever it is that threatens us," she thought, endeavouring to shake off the spell of terror wrought upon her by the strange visitor, "I must protect my father and myself. Poor papa is too ill in body and mind to battle with trouble or disgrace. It is I who must protect him, as I have done these past ten years."

Her eyes lighted up with tender and self-sacrificing devotion—such devotion and self-sacrifice as have actuated those noble heroines of all ages, whose names shine in history.

But Ilde did not dream that she possessed a heroine's soul. She only knew that trouble and perhaps disgrace threatened her gentle, loving father, and her resolute and generous young soul arose instinctively to take the burden on herself and thus spare him.

While she was thus thinking and resolving the intruder, regarded her with quiet interest. Her low, haughty tones, with their undercurrent of defiance, when speaking to him, had excited his attention, and he now surveyed the author of them as if she had been a natural curiosity. Evidently he was unused to contradiction or defiance. But, as he noted her brown hair, with its reddish tint turned to gold in the lamp-light, and rippling over her shoulders, her magnetic eyes so expressive of a glorious and noble soul, her pure features with their sweet yet spirited expression, the grace of her slender girlish figure, and her protecting care of the Baronet, his cold eyes suddenly assumed a strange glow of satisfaction not unmingled with delight.

Ilde noticed this singular expression and wondered at it.

"If you have business, sir, with my father," she said, with a quietness she did not feel at heart, "you can tell it to me. He is not well, and will be unable to talk with you to-night."

"I can wait until to-morrow then!"

"But if I choose that he shall not be disturbed then?" exclaimed Ilde, impetuously, annoyed at his calm self-assurance. "He is not well. For years he has been weak and depressed, and, if you have come to him with ill news, he must not hear you. Say what you have to say to me. I am my father's representative and protector!" she added, in a resolute tone.

The intruder smiled strangely.

"I am sorry," he said, in his soft voice, "that I cannot communicate my business to you, Miss Dare. In truth it is such that I can impart it only to Sir Allyn. Perhaps you are aware that my appointment with him to-night was made a long time ago—ten years, in fact!"

"Ten years!" repeated Ilde, with a shudder, adding, unconsciously, "Ten years! Why, it was ten years ago my father changed so strangely."

The intruder bowed assent.

"You are, then, connected with that change in him—that change which has puzzled all his friends, blighted his own life, and cast a shadow over that of his daughter?" demanded Ilde, her eyes striving in vain to read that impassive face. "You do not answer, but I know you are. Oh, sir, if you are his enemy, as I begin to fear you are, and have any hold upon him, as I imagine you have, I beg you to spare him," and her haughty tones melted to passionate entreaty. "He never did a base thing in his life. He is noble, good, and generous. He is as gentle as a saint. Every one who knows him loves him."

"Indeed!" remarked the stranger, in his mellifluous voice.

It was all he said, but his manner brought a look of wild alarm to the maiden's face, which quickly gave way to a resolute expres-

sion. She drew up her slender figure, and her splendid eyes dilated and glowed with the fire of an heroic soul, as she exclaimed,—

"Whoever strikes him," and she pointed to the couch, "must strike me first! I am but a young and feeble girl, but you will find that I can defend my father—even with my life."

"I see," muttered the visitor. "She has all the spirit of the Dares—the spirit Sir Allyn lacks."

Of his words the maiden caught only the name of the Baronet, and she turned to the latter. He still lay in a death-like unconsciousness, and a sudden fear came over her that death had indeed stilled her father's loving heart for ever.

In an instant the resolute, defiant spirit of the woman had given place to the terror of the anguished daughter.

With a frightened cry she placed her fingers on his wrist and felt his fluttering pulse, and laid her hand upon his heart.

Reassured by these indications of his continued existence, she redoubled her efforts for his restoration to consciousness.

"He is all right," declared the stranger. "He is already recovering."

He stepped back as the Baronet stirred slightly, and coolly watched his return to consciousness.

It was some minutes before Sir Allyn opened his eyes and remembered under what circumstances he had closed them; but when memory began to exert itself he raised his head from the pillow upon which his daughter had laid it, and said, in a tremulous whisper,—

"Who was it knocked, Ilde? It was no one to see me?"

"Yes, papa," answered the young girl, gently, in a lower whisper than he had employed. "A gentleman is here and wishes to see you. Look, father!"

She stepped aside, and Sir Allyn's gaze met that of the strange visitor.

At sight of him a cry arose to his lips which was half stifled in its utterance. His recent agitation returned with ten-fold force, and his form contracted like paper that is held over a scorching blaze.

"Dear papa, he cannot harm you," whispered Ilde, soothingly, yet herself alarmed at her father's emotion. "Look up and ask him what he wants. Or, let me send him away, father."

Her words seemed to rouse the Baronet, and he struggled for calmness, and forced himself to assume an upright posture.

Meanwhile the intruder watched the father and daughter with cat-like closeness, yet without even an appearance of interest.

Sir Allyn noticed the manner of his guest, and so soon as he could speak said,—

"Go, Ilde. I must be alone with my visitor."

"But, father!" expostulated the maiden, anxiously, "I cannot leave you. You may be ill again. You need me."

"No, darling, I am strong enough now. Have no fears. Go, and do not be anxious about me!"

He drew her to him with a sudden impulse, and kissed her face with remorseful tenderness, invoking a blessing upon her.

Ilde hesitated, and looked from her father to his guest. The face of the latter was without expression, seeming a mere mask. That of the former had a faint glow kindled in his cheeks, and there was an anxious restlessness in his manner. He had spoken with unusual decision, and with perceptible eagerness for her departure; and Ilde, satisfied that he had entirely recovered from his swoon, and prevented naturally by delicacy from urging a request to be allowed to remain at the secret conference, signified her obedience, and reluctantly went towards her boudoir.

At the threshold she paused, and bestowed a look at once appealing and defiant upon the stranger.

It was answered by a glance of admiration,



and, troubled and dissatisfied, she entered her boudoir, and closed the door behind her.

To retire to her bedchamber at present she felt to be impossible, so she replenished her fire, and threw herself upon the silken couch before it, giving herself up to painful speculations concerning the intruder and his business at Edencourt.

She had hardly quitted her father's room before the Baronet arose to his feet, steadying himself by leaning upon the back of a chair, and looked steadily at his unwelcome guest.

The latter met his gaze with a mocking smile, and said,—

"Well, I am here! The promise I made you ten years ago to-night has been kept! I am come to claim the fulfilment of our compact!"

Sir Allyn Dare passed his thin hand over his forehead, his lip quivered an instant, and he replied,—

"Yes, Vincent Therwell, you are here! But I trust your heart is not so hard and pitiless as it was ten years ago!"

"Just as hard and pitiless!" responded Therwell, softly.

The Baronet shuddered.

"Only a few minutes more," he moaned, "and I should have been free! I had begun to think you dead. I had begun to hope that you had perished in your iniquities, and now—"

He sank into a chair and leaned his face on his hands.

"You are flattering, decidedly flattering," returned Therwell, taking possession of a chair. "Since I have not perished, however, I advise you to make the best of the matter."

The words and manner of his guest were torture to the highly bred and sensitive Baronet; but he struggled to repress his agitation, and to appear unmoved, although his heart seemed on fire.

"You have changed greatly in ten years, Sir Allyn Dare," remarked Therwell, regarding his host as if he had been a picture or a statue. "When I saw you last, ten years ago, you gave promise of becoming portly, and your hair was jet black, and your cheeks were full. Now, at forty-five, you are a thin, worn, white-haired old man!"

"It is you who have made me so, Vincent Therwell!" declared Sir Allyn, in accents of bitter reproach.

Therwell uttered a low, soft laugh, as if he had received a compliment.

"And you have changed in other respects," he said, glancing around the room. "You were studious in those days, but you loved your horse, and the amusements of the chase. What a change now from the once gay Allyn Dare! Books, maps, and your telescope take up the most of your time. The deer have grown wild in your parks, and you haven't a decent hunter in your stables—"

"How do you know all that?" demanded the Baronet, quickly, recalling his lately expressed conviction that the eye of his enemy was ever upon him.

"You have done little in these ten years that I do not know," returned Therwell, with a sinister smile.

Sir Allyn again shuddered and his brow contracted with sudden pain.

"The truth is," continued the guest, "I have been kept informed of all your movements. A diary of your every day's actions has been forwarded to me; and had you attempted to evade your bond by flight, I should have been warned in time to frustrate the attempt!"

Sir Allyn, his face flushing with anger, as he saw how completely his daily life had been laid bare to the scrutiny of his deadly enemy, and again paling as he recollected that but a few hours earlier he had thought of flight, exclaimed,—

"I have suspected this before, but could not feel certain of it. Who, in all my household, is base enough to play the spy upon me?"

"I do not choose to let you know at

present!" answered Therwell, coolly. "I may have need of that person's farther services, and I must not impair the effectiveness of the arm I may wish to use."

"A spy, and I do not know who he is!" said Sir Allyn, bitterly. "It may be my most trusted dependant. Henceforth I will trust no one—no one save my child. She is the only one in all the world upon whom I can rely! But if I only knew the name of your minion—"

"It would do you little good to know it. I should not allow the person to be discharged until I had no farther need of such services."

Sir Allyn restrained the wrathful reply that arose to his lips, for he well knew that he could not resist the will of Therwell, and that he dared not go counter to his wishes.

With a sigh, therefore, he schooled himself to the patience that had now become part of his nature.

"Since you know all about me," he said, hastening to leave the distasteful subject, "tell me something about yourself. I have not known whether you were living or dead!"

"And that delightful state of uncertainty is what I most desired," returned Therwell, his eyes glittering with gratified malice. "I calculated that at one moment you would hope that I was dead, and the next your fears would be in the ascendant. I assure you I have quite enjoyed it. It was so while coming here to-night. Knowing how you hate and despise me, I determined to arrive at the last minute, when you would naturally be indulging thoughts of freedom."

The Baronet stifled a groan.

"You asked me where I had been, or something to that effect," resumed the guest.

"Where shall I begin my narrative? At the point when your father's death relieved me of my duties as his secretary, and cast me upon my own resources? Let me see. I left Edencourt ten years ago, with the capital I had saved, and the handsome sum you gave me at parting. I went over to Hamburg, and became a silk merchant. A few weeks ago I sold out to good advantage and came back to England, determined to settle here for the remainder of my days!"

"You have given up business then?" Sir Allyn forced himself to say.

"Certainly. I am rich enough without it. If I am not I soon shall be. Besides, I know your haughty blood would not brook intimacy with a tradesman, and I came home to be a gentleman!"

Sir Allyn Dare's lip involuntarily curled, and he would have expressed the opinion, had he dared, that something more than a life of ease was needed to transform Vincent Therwell into a thorough-bred and true gentleman.

But the words were not needed. Therwell read the curl of the lip, the expression of haughty scorn; his face darkened, and a heavy scowl disfigured his forehead.

"You haven't asked me where I live," he said, in a bland voice at variance with his looks.

"You said in England, I believe."

"Yes, I have purchased the freehold estate of Oakshaw, thirty miles from here. So when I am not at Edencourt you will have me for a neighbour, though not a very near one. I suppose you know the place well?"

"I do know it well, or rather I did years ago when I was young," answered the Baronet, hurriedly, as if anxious to keep the mind of his guest from the object of his visit.

"It is a very old place, with two round towers that are said to be many centuries old, but popular tradition errs on that point. Oakshaw has always been owned by gentlemen of birth."

"And you would intimate that I do not belong to that favoured class? In my case birth is unnecessary, for my friend Sir Allyn Dare will introduce me to society and vouch for my antecedents."

The Baronet coloured but made no response.

(To be continued.)

## LETTY'S LOVE STORY.

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### A MELBOURNE DINNER PARTY.

THE leap from London to Melbourne is a pretty wide one, and yet in these days of high pressure, the journey is undertaken with less sense of risk than was felt by our grandfathers when they embarked on the rumbling old stage coach in the country to pay a visit to the metropolis. Besides, Australia is in a sense only a larger England, and Melbourne presents many points of similarity with big, bustling British cities.

In a large house in one of the suburbs three gentlemen were sitting over their wine, dressed in the regulation evening attire, and looking much as guests at a dinner party would look in the old country.

It was a lovely evening, and the open windows let in a soft breeze, blowing with a keen salt odour from the sea.

Outside on the verandah there was a quantity of tropical plants in huge pots, and through the rifts of the boughs the silvery-tipped waters of the bay glittered in the pale moonlight.

The waves made a low murmur as they broke over the yellow sands and seethed against the sides of the long, narrow pier, running out like a black line into the sea. Away in the distance the lights of Williamstown were just visible, shining yellow in contrast to the purer sheen of the moonlight.

Of these three gentlemen two are known to us, although they look somewhat older than when we saw them last; and well they may, for life has not shown its sunniest side either to Reginald Aldham or Hubert Ellesmere of late.

It is true they have been fairly successful in their business of cattle farming, but although success is always sweet, there are some regrets that it cannot put to sleep, and some aspirations that it fails to satisfy.

"One feels quite civilized again after all these months of primitive savagery," observed Reginald to the host—an Englishman, who had settled in Australia some years ago, and had made a large fortune. He had been to Aldham Mount in the old days, and the two young men had come over from their station in the bush to spend a week or two with him. "I must confess that I find the change delightful."

"And yet you seem to get on very well in your cattle farming," returned Mr. Waddilove, pushing the deansers onwards. "You don't regret leaving England, do you?"

"I don't regret it, certainly. I have no cause to do so, for we have succeeded much better than we had any right to expect. Haven't we, Ellesmere?"

"Yes," Hubert replied, laconically.

"Still," added Reginald, with a sigh, "one can't prevent a feeling of home sickness coming over one sometimes."

"I have never felt it," observed Ellesmere, drily.

Reginald turned to him with lifted eyebrows.

"No, but you are such a queer, solitude-loving fellow now—quite different to what you used to be. All you care for is work—work, work from morning till night."

"Work is the best panacea a man can have. It brings forgetfulness."

"Not always," Reginald observed, in rather a melancholy tone. Then he turned to his host. "Do you know it was as much as I could do to induce him to accept your invitation, Waddilove? He tried his very best to back out of it, and I threatened to tell you of his boorishness."

"You may well call it by that name," said Hubert. "I really felt I was unfit for the society of civilized humanity; one gets to feel like that after a prolonged dose of flannel shirts and no waistcoats."

"Yes, but all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," observed the host, sentimentally; "and it will do you all the good in the world to have a week's racket in town. What vexes me so much is poor Ethel's illness. She would have arranged all sorts of gaieties for us if she had been able to get about." "Ethel" was his wife, who was only just recovering from an attack of typhus fever. "She might even have provided you with wives to take back to your station," he added, nly.

This humour did not seem to appeal to either of the young men. Hubert kept his eyes fixed moodily on the tablecloth, and Reginald said, after a moment's pause,—

"I'm afraid Mrs. Waddilove would have had her pains for nothing. We are both vowed to bachelorhood!"

Mr. Waddilove burst into a laugh.

"Nonsense! Two handsome young fellows like you; why, the notion's absurd! I wager that in twelve months from this date you'll both be provided with helpmates!"

"Remember the old copy-book adage, and do nothing rashly," said Ellesmere, with grim brevity. "So far as I am concerned you would certainly lose your bet."

"Why? Have you abjured the sex?"

"If by that you mean, have I lost my faith in women, I answer, yes. Helen of Troy and a female Croesus rolled into one would not tempt me!"

"You are not just, Ellesmere," said his host, putting up his hand to conceal a smile. "Perhaps your experience has been unfortunate; but, at any rate, it doesn't embrace the whole of female Christendom, and it's a little unfair to visit the sins of one woman on the whole of her sex. Don't you think so, Aldham?"

"For my part, I think no man is worthy of a really good woman," answered Reginald, very emphatically.

Ellesmere turned on him quickly.

"Agreed; but where wilt you find a really good woman?"

"Anywhere—everywhere!" warmly interposed Waddilove. "Why, in this very house there are two of the best women in the world—my wife and the woman who is nursing her. The devoted heroism of that young girl beats all I have ever seen. She has not very long come out from England; but since she has been here she has risked her life fifty times in nursing patients suffering from loathsome and infectious maladies. She has been to the lowest parts of the town, in alleys and slums that even you might shrink from entering, and wherever she has been sweetness and help have followed her. My wife is great at visiting among the slums, and when she fell ill Nurse Monica came to her because she knew her. Otherwise she confines her work almost wholly and solely to the poor, and from them she refuses to take money for her services!"

As Waddilove finished speaking there came a knock at the door, and a servant told him that his wife wished to see him. She had just awoke, and the nurse thought it a good opportunity for the husband to pay his usual daily visit.

Waddilove left the room in obedience to the summons, and Hubert went outside to the verandah, and leaned on the railings while he finished smoking his cigar, and gazed out over the waters of the bay.

Reginald still remained seated at the table, which was laden with fruit and flowers of the choicest and most costly kinds.

He was deep in a reverie, his cigar lay unheeded on his plate, and his one hand shaded his face from the lamplight. Suddenly a soft and gentle voice said,—

"I beg your pardon." Mrs. Waddilove thinks she would like some grapes, and I am going to take her up a bunch."

and snowy cap on the top of her rippling hair. Very sweet and sad the face looked under this cap. The eyes were large, and dark, and mournful, and all the colour in her face was centred in her lips.

"Marcia!" Reginald exclaimed, in a low, tense whisper, and with the uncertain accent of a man who cannot quite believe the evidence of his own senses. "Is it really you—alive—in the flesh?"

The nurse swerved backward, and seemed to contemplate flight, but Reginald divined her intention. Before she could reach the door, he had his back against it, and then she stood silent before him, her face deadly pale, and her bosom heaving with uncontrollable agitation.

Aldham reached out his hand and laid it tentatively on her shoulder. Yes, it was firm flesh and blood that met his touch, not the yielding air as he had half-feared. This was no ghost—no vision—but a living breathing woman—Marcia's very self.

He drew her to the light, and she yielded herself passively. Then he bent down and examined every feature of the sweet face—every familiar line that he thought his eyes would never again rest upon—every delicate contour that dwelt unforgotten in his memory.

"Thank Heaven—thank Heaven!" he cried, fervently. "It is really you, and the sin of bloodguiltiness has been taken from me. How can I ever be sufficiently grateful for the mercy vouchsafed me!"

Strangely earnest words from the lips of gay, careless, selfish, Reginald Aldham! And strangely earnest did he look as he stood there with the lamplight falling full on his face—all agniver with emotion.

The so-called nurse gazed at him long and seriously, then she said, very quietly,—

"I did not think it was possible for you to be so moved, even by the appearance of one whom you supposed to be dead!"

"Then you don't know what I have suffered since," he answered, quickly. "It seemed to me that the moment I heard of your supposed death I saw myself as I was for the first time, and realised the full depth of my infamy. I was a scoundrel, Marcia—I deserved to be blasted off the face of the earth, and if you hated me a thousand times more than it is my nature to hate, it would still be far from my deserts."

"There is a certain point where language fails, and I have reached that point. Words cannot tell you of my remorse when I thought I had driven you to the last extremity—" He stopped and shuddered, while she still looked at him with her large, serious eyes.

"Marcia, I hardly dare ask your forgiveness, but here, in the attitude of the humblest of suppliants, I confess my penitence!"

He fell on his knees, and buried his face in her dress, still holding her small cold hand in his.

Hubert, who had been attracted by the sound of voices, came to the window, but on seeing the tableau before him, drew hastily backward. Unfortunately, there was no other egress from the balcony, save through the room, and so he was forced, unwillingly, to play the part of eavesdropper.

Neither Marcia nor Reginald were aware of his presence. Into the eyes of the former tears were rising. They rolled slowly down her cheeks, and fell on the bowed head of the man before her.

"Get up, Hubert," she said, tremulously. "It is not for me to refuse forgiveness of a wrong, when I have implored Heaven for my own sins. I had thought—and hoped we should never meet again, but since it has been decreed otherwise, the least we can do is not to part as enemies!"

"Part!" he exclaimed, rising to his feet. "What need is there for us to part at all? Why should I not do all that is left me to right the wrong? If you say you forgive me, then surely I may hope that you believe in the sincerity of my repentance, and my desire to make up to you, as far as possible, for all

the unhappiness I have caused you to suffer. Try me once more, Marcia—take me for your husband, and it shall be the effort of my life to make you forget the past!"

She looked at him with wide open eyes, her breath coming and going swiftly.

"But are you not married already?" she whispered, shivering.

"No, thanks be to Providence, which saved me from that last wickedness! If you will be my wife, we will begin a fresh life together, here in this new world, where no one will know what has happened away in England, and we will hope there may yet be years of happiness in store for us, undeserved as I shall feel them to be. Tell me Marcia"—he put his two hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her eyes—"is all the old love gone for ever, or can the ashes be fanned into being again?"

Alas, poor Marcia! She was not of the stuff of which heroines are made, and that soft wooing voice had all its old power over her. She had fancied that his cruelty had killed every vestige of affection in her heart, and yet it flamed up again, keen and bright, under the influence of his presence.

Well, perhaps it was better so. Her only chance of happiness lay in Reginald's hands, and unworthy of her as he had proved himself, there could be no doubt that the fire of tribulation through which he had passed had had a great effect on him.

"But tell me," he said, presently, "how it is I find you here?"

A deep shaded flush mounted to the girl's brow, and she clasped her two hands nervously together. When she spoke she kept her eyes fixed on the ground.

"You heard how in misery and desperation, I tried to take my life?" she murmured, in a voice that hardly rose above a whisper.

"Yes, I read an account of it in the newspapers first, and when I hurried up to Book's Nest, and found you were gone, my fears were confirmed."

"I was very miserable," Marcia said, piteously, "it seemed to me my heart was dead, and the mere fact of my being in the world, cast a shadow of shame on my sister. Poor Letty! She was so pure and strong, and good that her very presence was a reproach to me."

"Then, when Miss Ellesmere's will turned up, and Letty was resolved that I should claim the estates, I felt that death itself would be preferable, so I—I tried to drown myself. It was a dark evening, and the tide floated me down the river very quickly; eventually I was picked up by a bargeman, who thought at first that I was dead."

"But his wife did her best to restore me, and after a long time I recovered consciousness. The barge stopped at Greenwich, and the man and his wife were helping me to land, with the intention of taking me to a hospital, when a gentleman who was passing, stopped to inquire what was the matter with me. It turned out to be the great doctor, Sir James Hay, and directly he saw me, he recognised me, for it was he who came down to Woodside to see my mother when she was ill, and luckily for me, he remembered my face."

"They told him where and how they had found me, and he gave them some money, and said he would take charge of me. I can't tell you how good and kind he was to me!"

Marcia continued, her voice quivering with emotion. "And more than that, he respected my desire for silence. It seemed to me that as I was supposed to be dead, my purpose was accomplished, and if I could only get right away, there would never be any danger of my shame reflecting itself on Letty."

"So I made Sir James promise never to betray my secret, and through his kindness, I was enabled to get some training as a nurse, and come out here. He writes to me occasionally now, and the last time he sent me news of Letty, and her photograph!"

Marcia paused a moment, then added, timidly,—



"I suppose it was because she claimed your estates that you came to Australia?"

A deep red stained Reginald's brow. He hesitated for a minute, then he said,—

"No; I have nothing to do with the Ellesmere estates."

"Nothing to do with them!" Marcia repeated, in amazement.

"My name is not Ellesmere at all. It is Reginald Aldham. Hubert Ellesmere was a friend of mine, who was staying at Highfield the same time I was. And if you remember, you found a card which fell out of my pocket one day when I was talking to you, with his name upon it. You imagined that it was my own, and I did not contradict you—indeed, I was glad at the mistake, for I had serious reasons for wishing to conceal my identity."

Reginald did not think it necessary to disclose what those reasons were—namely, his engagement to Violet Winter, which, to do him justice, he had been anxious enough to break off. He would doubtless have succeeded in freeing himself from it, but for Sir Wilfred's authoritative notion, and his own debts, which had combined to force him into acquiescence in the arrangements for the marriage.

"But," Marcia said, "surely it was Ellesmere Grange that I stayed at?"

"Yes; and I had to square the housekeeper not to let you know the truth."

"Then, who is Hubert Ellesmere?"

"He was the real owner of the Grange, and your sister's engaged lover."

"Lettice's?"

He nodded assentingly, and Marcia threw out her hands with a sudden movement of despairing remorse.

"What is it?" asked Reginald, who knew nothing of the complication that had ensued so far as Lettice was concerned, by his assumption of her fiancé's name. It must be remembered that he was unaware of Lettice's presence at Rook Nest, the fact of which had been carefully concealed from him by Mrs. Barker. When the housekeeper informed him that Marcia had left, she did not think it necessary to add that she had been accompanied in her flight by Lettice. "What is it?" he repeated, finding Marcia silent.

She turned upon him a perfectly ashen face, for her swift intuition had led her to the truth, and she understood now the stony horror that had come in her sister's eyes at the mention of her lover's name.

"It is this. Lettice believes that the man who deceived me by a false marriage, was Hubert Ellesmere!"

## CHAPTER XXXI. AND LAST.

LETTICE meant what she said when she declared to Lady Alicia her intention of placing the Ellesmere estates in the hands of Mr. Maxwell, and leaving that gentleman to communicate to Hubert the tidings that he was once more free to claim his own. And after she had done this, she had to think over what she was to do herself; for life was a very different matter to the penniless girl to what it had been a few weeks ago when she was the beautiful petted darling of society, and just at first the change pressed upon her rather hardly.

Already the house in Belgravian had been given up, and Lady Alicia had retired with a very bad grace to the small Kensington tenement provided for her by Sir Wilfred. That she would be very miserable there, was a foregone conclusion.

She was a woman to whom society and admiration were as the very breath of her nostrils, and now both threatened to desert her. On her small income and in her small house it was impossible to think of entertaining, and added to this was the undeniable fact that her beauty was on the wane. Paint and powder may be all very well in their way, but there comes a time when their efficacy ceases,

and that time had almost arrived for Lady Alicia.

Poor Lady Alicia! We will say good-bye to her with regret for misdirected energies, and talents that had been exercised in the wrong direction. If she had taken half the pains to do good that she had taken to do evil, her future would have been a very different one!

While Lettice was still waiting for a situation to offer itself she received a letter from Lady Aldham, our former acquaintance Violet Winter.

Violet had heard through Mr. Maxwell—who was in pretty constant communication with Sir Wilfred—of Lettice's surrender of the Ellesmere property, and her heart had gone out to the girl for whom, in the old days, she had really conceived a very sincere affection. So long as Lettice retained the estates, so long would Violet have shown her displeasure by ignoring her; but now she sent her a very pressing invitation to go down to her house, and stay as long as she would.

"You shall be as quiet as you will, and do exactly as you like," Violet wrote, "and for my part, I shall be only too delighted to have your society. I do not go out much just now, and my husband's duties take him from home a good deal, so that I really need a companion."

Lettice accepted, and found herself once more at Aldham Mount; but under what changed conditions!

Her own romance was over, she told herself; for it never struck her that Hubert, even when he learned her mistake, would ever forgive her for her doubts of him. How could he pardon those cruel words of contumely and insult that had fallen from her lips on that last day of their meeting in the plantation?

No, Lettice decided, she and happiness had bidden each other a long good-bye; but all the same, she could sympathise in other people's joy, and it was delightful to see Violet and her husband together, such adoring love on the one side, such perfect trust and confidence on the other. The whole house seemed to breathe a fuller, purer atmosphere than in the old days when Lady Alicia reigned as mistress.

Violet never spoke to Lettice about Hubert, but all the same she was very curious concerning the probable relation between the two young people.

"I suppose Hubert will come home now," she said to her husband, during one of their frequent *tête à tête*s. Sir Wilfred undoubtedly enjoyed having his wife's society all to himself, though he tried hard not to be an exacting husband.

"I suppose he will; but I have heard nothing from Maxwell. So it is clear he has not yet made up his mind."

"Why?"

"Because he would let his solicitor know his intentions, and I have asked Maxwell to communicate them to me. Perhaps there is an attraction in Australia—I have heard of such things!—and Hubert will not leave it!"

"Nonsense!"

"Why is it nonsense, my dear? You will allow the young man the privilege of falling in love, won't you?"

"Yes, but not of changing his mind."

"Ah!" Sir Wilfred playfully pinched her rosy ear. "You reserve that for your own sex!"

"Certainly, although I must say it is frequently usurped by yours! But really, Wilfred, joking apart, is there no way by which we could bring these two together again? They used to be so fond of each other last year."

"Last year!" repeated the Baronet, rather sadly. "Since then so many changes have happened. The roses have shed their petals, the winter snows have all melted, everything is different."

"Except you, dearest," she whispered, recognizing the note of melancholy in his tone, and half guessing its cause. She leaned her head against his shoulder. "The changes that have taken place have brought us happi-

ness; but they have made no difference to your love!"

"No, nothing will ever make any difference to that," he rejoined, fondly. "I cannot say that it has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength; but it has certainly done so, as far as you are concerned. You were a little girl less than ten when you came to me first; but even then you crept into my heart, and made a place for yourself that no other woman could ever usurp."

"That is very delightful of you to say so, and I hope I appreciate your very unusual constancy, dear," she said, demurely. "But we are wandering from our subject!"

As a matter of fact, in this first year of his married life Sir Wilfred had a little way of wandering from every subject that did not actually concern Violet! Doubtless he would get over this weakness in time, for even Romeo could hardly have kept up his rhapsodies after more than twelve months' experience of holy matrimony!

At this moment a diversion was caused by the entrance of a servant with the afternoon mail bag, and Violet, who—like all women—loved to receive letters as much as she hated writing them, instantly pronounced upon it.

"Why," she exclaimed, "here is a letter from Reginald! That is strange, for you had one from him by the last mail, and he does not often favour us more than once in three months. I wonder if he sends us any exciting news?"

She waited impatiently while her husband read the letter; but before he came to the end, he put down the flimsy sheets of thin foreign paper, and turned to her with an expression of utter amazement on his face.

"News, indeed!" he exclaimed. "Reginald writes to say he is married!"

"Married! To whom?"

"To Marcia Rafford, or Trevelyan as she ought to be called, Lettice's sister!"

It was not often Violet was taken by surprise, but this time she certainly was. She could only look at her husband in silent incredulity.

"It is perfectly true," he resumed, smiling.

"The ceremony took place last week, and Reginald and his wife are back at the station, settling down into a regular squatter's life. By the way, the station belongs wholly to him now, as Hubert Ellesmere has given up his share of it, and started for England."

"Started for England, has he?" said Lady Aldham, nodding her head eagerly. "Then we shall see him at Aldham Mount before the week is out, and, meanwhile, we will say nothing to Lettice of this marriage till he comes."

"You may depend upon it, she will hear the news from her sister. Perhaps she is reading it at this very moment."

Sir Wilfred's surmise was incorrect. The mail had brought no letter from Australia for Lettice, and she never even dreamed of the astounding intelligence that she was so soon to hear.

The next day, Sir Wilfred had to go over to Stanford, and Violet and Lettice spent the afternoon out of doors in the garden. It was a lovely day of late summer. The roses were still in their second season of bloom, and their petals, pink, golden, and white, lay strewn on the dark green velvet of the close-cut lawn. The south wall that bounded one side of the lawn was gorgeous with royal purple clematis, and sweet with waving tendrils of honeysuckle, and, down in the border below, tall hollyhocks flaunted their spikes of blossom side by side with dahlias and carnations and splendid Japanese lilies. In the air was the mellow softness of autumn.

"I like a day like this," said Lettice, dropping her work, and folding her hands across her lap. "There is none of the unrest of the spring-time, or the excitement of mid-summer. Everything breathes of peace and completion."

She sighed involuntarily as she finished speaking.



[LETTY STARTED TO HER FEET, WILD AND WHITE, FOR HUBERT STOOD BEFORE HER.]

After all, was completion so much to be desired, unless, indeed, it brought contentment with it?

She had tried her best to be content, and to renounce cheerfully all those joys of life and love that had once promised her so fairly. She had told herself that hopes of happiness were over, so far as she was concerned, for evermore, and in their place was that watchword which men call duty. Duty! It sounds cold and stern to a young heart, where the warm red blood still pulses. A poor meagre substitute for the personal happiness which all of us claim as a divine right!

But, Letty told herself, her worst sorrow had been wrought by her own hand. She had believed evil of Hubert, when, had she only been true to herself and him, she would have done battle with the whole world, if need be, in defence of her faith.

So lost was she in her thoughts that she did not hear the sound of hard-driven carriage wheels on the terrace, or notice that Violet had quietly stolen away in order to be ready to greet her guests.

The old moss-grown sundial in the centre of the lawn marked the minutes as they "floated in light away;" the boom of a heavy velvet-bodied bee, as he buzzed noisily into the lilies, accorded well with the silence; and in the plantation a bird was trilling out a few gentle notes, as if his heart were so happy that it overflowed into a song.

In her utter unconsciousness she might have sat to a painter for a picture of silence. She was wearing some dark, soft, thin dress that fell in graceful folds about her *swell* young figure, and in her corsage was pushed a bunch of daintily tinted sweet peas, Hubert's favourite flower.

"Letty!"

She started to her feet, wild and white; for the voice had been Hubert's!

Yes, and Hubert stood before her, tall, bronzed, and handsome—Hubert, with a heavy chestnut beard that somehow made him look

older; but with the same eager blue eyes, the same bright kindly face, and with both arms outstretched towards her.

"Letty, my love, my darling!" Then she knew the truth, that it was really he, and that his love had even stood the cruel test to which she had subjected it. There was no need for words. The heart can speak without their aid when the eyes are eloquent, and in another minute Lettie had sprung forward uttering a little half-hysterical cry, and oblivious of everything save the fact that she was utterly, entirely happy. Past, future, all were forgotten in this one supreme moment of ecstasy, the remembrance of which would live with her as long as life itself lasted!

There is little more to add. To Hubert Marcia had confided the task of telling the tale of her rescue to Lettie, and he also had with him a letter that she had not trusted to the mail bag. In it the newly made wife repeated the tale of Sir James Hay's kindness, how she had treasured the likeness of Letty that the good-hearted physician had procured for her; and finally she breathed a hope of a time to come when the two sisters might meet once more, with all misunderstandings cleared up between them.

Of her husband she did not speak. Perhaps she thought it better to let the future bear witness to his repentance, or perhaps she felt that this part of the story might with advantage be left to Ellesmere.

Hubert touched very lightly on Reginald's assumption of his name, which had in effect been purely accidental in the first place.

Very much could not be said in extenuation of the young man's conduct, for all through it had been that of a heartless libertine. But a very severe lesson had been read him when he imagined Marcia had been driven to commit suicide, and its effect would certainly last as long as he lived.

He had made a full admission of everything

on that fateful evening when Hubert, from his post on the verandah, had heard all that passed between him and Marcia; and then it was that Hubert understood how poor Letty had been deceived—innocently, so far as Marcia was concerned.

The very next day there arrived a communication from Mr. Maxwell informing him that Lettie had given up the Ellesmere estates, and imploring their former owner to return and claim them.

In the early autumn a little son and heir was born to Sir Wilfred, and as soon as Violet was strong enough to leave the house preparations for Letty's wedding were set on foot; for Lady Aldham insisted that it should take place from Aldham Mount, and Sir Wilfred was equally anxious to give the bride away.

It was a very quiet wedding, although the church was full of people from all the villages for miles around, and the fame of the bride's beauty, and the romantic story attaching to her, made it quite an event in the neighbourhood.

Very lovely looked our heroine in her sweeping train of bridal white, with the diadem of orange blossoms shining through the misty folds of her veil, and her sweet face pale with emotion, but full of love and trust as her gaze rested on the stalwart form of her husband. The years might come and go, taking away with them his strength, and her fairness, but they would not touch their love—that was eternal.

Like pure gold, it had been tried in the furnace and not found wanting.

What more fitting than the sweet cadences of wedding-bells as an end to "LETTY'S LOVE STORY?"

[THE END.]

For sleeplessness, a Chicago physician recommends a light meal of plain food just before retiring.





[DOLLY LOOKED LOVELIER THAN EVER IN A WHITE MUSLIN AND A BLUE RIBBON AT HER THROAT AND WAIST.]

NOVELETTE.]

## AMBITIOUS MRS. WHITE.

## CHAPTER I.

NEXT to the distinction of really belonging, however distantly, to a family of note and standing comes the satisfaction of having a name neither vulgar nor hopelessly plebeian, but yet so ordinary that new acquaintances cannot possibly annoy the owner by asking to which branch of the family he belongs.

There is a certain pleasure in the high-sounding names of Howard or Courtenay; but when once the question has been asked point blank, and the luckless bearer of the aristocratic cognomen has had to confess she is not related to the Duke of Norfolk or the Earl of Devon, as the case may be,—why, then all the advantage of her name is lost, and she might just as well have been Mrs. Somebody-else.

When Mrs. White came to live at Monk-haven her arrival caused quite a stir in the community. No one knew anything about her. The name was so vague, it told nothing; and all chance of information from someone at her last house was destroyed by the fact promptly published by the house-agent—Mrs. White had been travelling constantly for the last five years, while her daughters were finishing their education!

Monkhaven is a very pleasant country place, within a few miles of a large midland town, and yet rural enough to boast beautiful scenery and natural charms. It was not exactly fashionable, but several good families lived within a short distance. It had its own park, its own tennis club, was quite independent of Monkton for society or amusement, and finally boasted, what the larger place had not, a real live nobleman; for the Earl of Glendale lived at Glendale Castle,

and his wife was not at all too grand or exclusive to visit the ladies of Monk-haven.

It was a place where everyone knew everyone. For the most part the population was divided into two classes, the gentry and the poor. There were very few shops—Monkton being so easy of access—and these of the most primitive kind; therefore there were no middle-class cliques. People visited each other in pleasant, friendly fashion, knew all about their neighbours, and took a warm interest in each other's concerns. Such was the place Mrs. White had chosen to make her home, and her advent caused quite a commotion, a stranger coming to reside in their midst being an unheard-of event.

"I blame my brother-in-law very much," said Lady Glendale, discussing the news in the Vicar's drawing-room. "If he does not care to reside at the Lindens himself, he might have given me the chance of finding him a tenant. I have two or three friends who would be delighted to rent such a house for a year or two. But to send us a neighbour we none of us have even heard of, seems an utter disregard of our feelings."

"Mrs. White may be very nice, mamma," suggested Lady Alberta; "and, after all, Uncle Charles has a right to please himself."

"Is Mrs. White a friend of Mr. Hubert?" inquired the Vicar. "If so, no doubt she will prove an acquisition to the place."

"She is nothing of the sort. My brother-in-law has never set eyes on her. He actually let a house-agent advertise the Lindens in the daily papers, and Mrs. White was accepted as his tenant before I even heard of it."

Mr. Dean was not ready with a reply. He could hardly remind the Countess that Mr. Hubert's means were limited for his position, and, being obliged to live in a mild climate for his wife's sake, it was natural he should try to obtain a tenant for the Lindens. The Vicar had had his own experience of money dealings between relations, and was of opinion plain Mrs. White might be a more satisfactory

tenant to the Honourable Charles than his sister's aristocratic friends.

"They are coming down to-morrow," said Lady Alberta, cheerfully, "Mrs. White and her two daughters. The girls have been educated abroad while their mother travelled."

The Vicar's wife and the Countess exchanged glances.

"What was Mr. White?" asked Mr. Dean, promptly.

"Nobody knows," replied the Countess.

"I believe he has been dead a number of years, so she is not likely to enact the part of a disconsolate widow. I wrote to my brother-in-law, and he replied Mrs. White's origin was nothing to him, and that her banker's reference was quite satisfactory."

"Then she is well off!"

The Countess shrugged her shoulders.

"She is to pay three hundred a-year for the use of the Lindens. Charles leaves everything—plate, linen, carriage. She is to keep on his gardener and groom, but will bring her own house servants. I have told the Earl I shall certainly not call on her unless I hear something more of her antecedents."

Left alone, Mr. and Mrs. Dean looked at each other.

"I never saw Lady Glendale so put out."

"Nor I," replied his wife, with a smile. "But you must own it is annoying that strangers should be at the Lindens just now."

"You are too quick for me, Mary. I can't follow you in the least."

"The Countess is expecting her eldest son. Viscount Hubert's travels are over for the present, and he has promised to spend three months at the Castle."

"Well?"

"Oh, Fred, how provoking you are! The Miss Whites have just left school, *ergo*, they are young. If they should be attractive, too, the Countess will spend her days in one long

dread lest one of them may become her daughter-in-law."

The Vicar whistled. It was distinctly unclerical, but he was mortal. He had been at school and college with Viscount Hubert. The two were sworn friends. He had listened over and over again to my lady's laments that her son would not find a wife; and now the thing was once suggested to him, he understood perfectly why the unknown young ladies at the Lindens must be a grievance to Lady Glendale.

Mrs. Dean laughed merrily.

"We may all be alarming ourselves needlessly. Mrs. White may turn out to be an aristocratic widow, and her girls beautiful heiresses!"

The Vicar smiled.

"I rather pity them if the Countess sets herself against them. No one at Monkshaven will dare to call till the Castle has set them the example."

"You will have to call as their parish priest, Fred, and I hope you'll smuggle me in with you, for I am dying with curiosity to see the Whites."

Mr. and Mrs. Dean were of excellent family, and possessed good private means, so that though the living of Monkshaven (which, by the way, had come to the Vicar from Lord Glendale) was a poor one, they were by no means needy. Their income and their position were quite assured, and they could afford to run counter to the Countess if it pleased them. As a fact, however, perfect harmony reigned between the Castle and the Vicarage, while the Deans were, the Countess admitted, Lord Hubert's dearest friends.

The Glendales were not rich for their position. Part of the property being unentailed, the Earl's father had settled it on his younger son.

Never until the present time had the Lindens been separated from the Castle, which was perhaps why the Countess so resented the former residence being let to strangers. Then, too, the Glendales had a large family. The heir was thirty, Alberta twenty-seven, and there were six other girls, not only unmarried, but without the shadow of an engagement ring.

What remained of the property was entailed, and must revert to Viscount Hubert. The estate was charged with a moderate allowance for Lady Glendale; for the seven girls there was absolutely nothing.

Mr. Hubert was a kind of sore point with the reigning family. The child of a second marriage, he was only seven years older than his nephew the Viscount.

The darling of his father's old age the late Earl had alienated for his sake all the property he possibly could from the title, and Charles, instead of being grateful and doing something to uphold the honour of the family, had straightway married a nobody, who brought him not a penny of dower, and moreover possessed such a delicate chest she could not live upon his own property. Add that she presented him with a baby every eighteen months or so, was an inveterate bad manager, and a chronic invalid, and you will understand that the Countess of Glendale had some cause to complain of her low-born sister-in-law.

Lord Glendale was different from his wife. He was a jovial, happy-go-lucky sort of man, who made the best of everything. He would have liked more money, but he did not grumble at his poverty. He would have liked to see his girls with loving husbands and homes of their own, but he never reproached them with staying in the parental nest. He was devoted to his wife, and perhaps a little ruled by her; but, for all that, he was an excellent landlord and an affectionate father.

"They have come, Fred," said pretty Mrs. Dean, as she and her husband sat at breakfast on Sunday morning. "Louisa saw a fly drive up to the Lindens late last night. I do wonder if they will be at church this morning."

"Shall I send to inquire?" demanded the Vicar, smiling.

"I think you are too provoking."

"Well, my dear, depend upon it Mrs. White will excite more attention than my sermon. I feel rather disposed to be jealous of her."

"I think they are quite to be excused if they do not come this morning. Just arrived in a strange place they may well feel tired and in need of rest."

"Certainly; but all the same, Molly, Mrs. White will be in church this morning, and bring her daughters, unless they are hopelessly deformed or remarkably plain. She will want to exhibit them, you know, as a bribe to the neighbourhood to call on her."

"I think you are most censorious, Fred. Specially so for a clergyman."

"My dear Molly, I never knew that to be blind was one of the duties of my profession. Don't look so vexed. Why," he added, mischievously, "I expected you to be in high spirits to-day."

"Why?"

"Because the Vicarage pew faces that sacred to the Lindens; therefore, my dear, you will have a far better chance than the rest of the world for making up your mind respecting my new parishioners."

"Fred, you are incorrigible!"

"I hope not, dear! Don't try to look shocked, Molly. You will never succeed. Be your own natural self, my love, and remember you are only twenty-five, and can't be expected to view life as seriously as Lady Glendale does at fifty-four!"

Molly was laughing heartily.

"Lord Hubert arrived last night, I suppose. Fred—really it seems too dreadful to suggest—I suppose he did not travel with the Whites?"

Monkshaven church was a beautiful specimen of Gothic architecture. It was so old that its venerable grey walls seemed to have a charm of their own quite apart from their sacred character.

Then, though no modern improvements had spoiled the fabric, money had ever been ready for repairs and restoration, with the result that none of the ravages of time had impaired the building, and it stood forth perfect in its preservation, age only having mellowed and sanctified its beauty.

Of "pews," as the word is usually understood, there were none. The nave was filled with open benches of dark oak, the two front being sacred to Glendale Castle, the rest free and open; the chancel was devoted to the choir stalls; while in the transepts were, perhaps, half-a-dozen benches allotted to such families as by right of long residence demanded this privilege.

Perhaps it is more correct to say these seats were allotted to certain houses rather than particular people; the front bench on the pulpit side had always belonged to the Vicar's family, and in like manner the one opposite was the property of the Lindens.

Mary Dean was not "parishy." There were good schools, and well-paid teachers. There were also a goodly number of young unmarried folks eager to help in the Sunday-school. The Vicar's wife, with her husband, her nursery, her accounts, and visiting list, was in no wise called on to add to her duties, so she walked into church on this August Sunday, and took her usual seat as naturally as though she had been the wife of some layman.

The Sunday-school children sat at the west end of the church with their teachers, among whom were Lady Alberta and Lady Edina.

Mrs. Dean had found this so when she came home a bride, and she had never made the least attempt to interfere with these damsels and their authority.

The sun poured in through the beautiful stained windows as the congregation took their places. Mrs. Dean noticed that the whole of the Castle family were at church, ten people all told, and also that Lord Hubert's eyes wandered towards the door, as though he felt some interest in the late arrivals.

She herself kept a steady watch on the pew opposite her, but it remained empty all through the service.

Molly had told her husband the Whites might well be excused if they omitted their devotions on this first Sunday of their arrival at Monkshaven; but she felt distinctly aggrieved she had not had a chance of seeing them.

As she walked slowly down the aisle after the service, when the church was nearly empty, she noticed two things. A stranger sat in one of the benches near the door, and Viscount Hubert was waiting in the porch to claim her attention.

"I am coming in to lunch," he said, pleasantly, as he took her hand, "if you think I shan't spoil Fred's afternoon sermon. The others have gone home."

She could see the large waggone in the distance, and answered, warmly,—

"Of course, we shall be delighted. I am so glad you have come to the Castle for a good long time."

He smiled.

"My mother made a point of it. I fancy she will repent her bargain. I wasn't out out for an idle life, and I make a very poor hand at society, I can tell you."

"Nonsense!"

A strange light came into his eyes as she spoke, but it was not Mrs. Dean's words that had brought it there. He asked, eagerly,—

"Who is that girl?"

His companion looked up. The stranger she had left in church was passing. Mary Dean had seen many pretty women and some beautiful ones, but never had she met a face which interested her so much as that on which Lord Hubert's gaze was riveted.

The girl might have been eighteen or less. She was dressed in the simplest robe of soft grey serge. A white hat rested on her sunny hair. Her attire was of the cheapest. Only its simplicity and perfect taste redeemed it from plainness; but the face—Molly could not make out the charm, she only felt it.

The stranger was of middle height and slender figure. Her hair was of the brightest, sunniest brown, the brown of a newly-shelled chestnut. Her eyes were blue, that wonderful dark blue which at times looks almost violet in its depths. Her complexion was colourless, the rich creamy pallor which often goes with auburn hair. Her brows and lashes were almost black, which gave her a piquant charm.

It was a face one felt ought to live in the sunshine; but about the mouth were lines of sadness, and the expression, though neither querulous nor repining, had about it a wistful sadness, which went straight to Molly's heart.

"Who is she?" unconsciously repeating Hubert's question. "She must be a stranger. I am sure I never saw that face before."

"It is the new young miss at the Lindens, ma'am," said the organ-blower, overhearing Mrs. Dean's remark, and feeling it a privilege to instruct his Vicar's wife. "The family comes last night, and they do say that Miss White is a beauty."

"And this is Miss White?"

"No, mum! This is the young one. Miss White is the eldest of the two."

Mrs. Dean and Lord Hubert went in to the pleasant noonday meal. The Vicar soon joined them, and the conversation, of course, turned on the Whites.

"There was a letter for the mother this morning from some friend at Florence, assuring her Mrs. White would be quite an acquisition to any neighbourhood," said Hubert, simply. "It was rather a relief to us, for my mother has been resenting the house being let to strangers."

"It seemed hard on her," admitted the Vicar, "but I suppose your uncle had a right to please himself?"

"Poor Charles!" said the Viscount, who had never looked on Mr. Hubert as an uncle, since they were as nearly of an age as many



brothers. "Of course he has. I fancy, even with Mrs. White's three hundred a-year, things will go hardly with them."

"They are abroad, I think I heard?"

"Not yet. They may have to go this winter. At present they are in apartments at Hastings."

"Apartments with six children!"

"Eight, please, Mrs. Dean! The twins arrived six weeks ago. Yes, I suppose it is close quarters. Charles is a very domesticated man, and wrapped up in his family, so he doesn't mind."

"I wished they could have stayed at the Lindens," said the Vicar.

"I don't think they would have been happy here. While the family was small it did not matter; but poor old Charles seldom tells his stories, his wife has not a sixpence, so that their whole income is his three hundred a-year, which would not keep up the Lindens. By letting the place he doubles his means, and, here the young man hesitated, for he was a dutiful son, "somehow, Dean, I don't think it would have been pleasant for them to live here and economise under my mother's eyes."

## CHAPTER II.

A WOMAN of forty turned, dressed in the most elegant of morning robes, her complexion delicate as a girl's, her hair black as the raven's wing, arrayed in the most elaborate style, rings of rare value upon her plump, white hands. A very embodiment of luxurious prosperity was Julia White, the Honorable Charles Hubert's tenant, and the temporary mistress of the Lindens.

The girl reclining in the low chair opposite her was a younger likeness of herself. Rosaline White was a dainty fairy-like figure, dressed with an almost eastern love of brightness, and with an almost infantile charm of manner; but the flashing black eyes, the glorious masses of blue black hair, were her mother's own. There was a warm, strong affection between them. Mrs. White made no secret of her partiality; Dolly was all very well, but Rosaline was her darling, the one object of her life.

"I am delighted that we have secured this place!" said Mrs. White, languidly, sipping her chocolate. It was long past noon, and most people were beginning to think of lunch; but Mrs. White was luxurious, and had but just left her room.

Rosaline pouted.

"I don't feel much in love with Monkhaven at present. It will be as dull as ditchwater unless the people call."

"Of course they will call! The Countess of Glendale among the first. I have it on the best authority that the Earl is painfully embarrassed, and they would do anything to secure an heiress for their son."

Rosaline's reply was strange, the more so on account of her childish ways and the infantile manner she usually adopted. She looked straight into her mother's face, and said, sharply,—

"You are playing a dangerous game, mamma; I suppose you feel sure it's safe?"

Mrs. White winced.

"I wish you would not speak so bluntly, Rosaline. Can't you trust your mother?"

"I don't often have a chance to speak at all!" said Miss White, coolly. "I ask you again—is it safe?"

"Perfectly! Of what are you afraid?"

Rosaline considered.

"I was only twelve years old when it all happened," she said, gravely, "but I remember everything perfectly. Do you suppose, mother, no one else has as good a memory?"

"You remember because it changed your whole life," said the widow, quietly. "Other people do not keep things which happened fifteen years ago fresh in their recollection!"

Unless they suffered by them!"

"No one suffered but ourselves," said Mrs. White, with such extreme bitterness that no one could doubt she spoke the truth. "My husband had a morbid sense of honour. He gave up everything. His creditors were paid to the last farthing. There lives no human creature who suffered by him except us—to whom it brought ruin."

"I never understood him," said Rosaline, gravely; "but now I think I can imagine the sort of man he was!"

"Hush!" cried her mother, "you must not speak like that, it is dangerous!"

"I wish the need for caution was over. I get so tired of being afraid to speak or move; we seem to live in such a network of deceit. It is hateful!"

"You have no right to speak so since you alone will benefit by it," said her mother, reproachfully. "You will have enormous wealth, Rosaline. You will probably marry a nobleman. You ought to be contented."

Rosaline stamped her foot impatiently.

"But there is Dolly. Mother, at times I almost hate her! I seem to feel she is my rival, and that some day she will wrest everything from us. I cannot help wishing she were dead!"

"Hush!" cried her mother, angrily, "I cannot have you talk so. Dolly shall never harm you, darling; I promise that. Only play your cards carefully, and all shall be well."

A very few minutes later, and Dolly joined them. It was a matter of comment to all who knew this family, of how little count the younger girl was considered. The wistful sadness of her face was not a natural trait.

Six months ago, Dolly White had been the merriest girl in a French convent which counted twenty pupils—the darling of her schoolfellows, the favourite of her teachers. All had gone well with her until at Christmas she went "home" to join her mother and sister.

It bewildered the poor child at first to find how unwelcome she was to them. Then she tried in vain to win their love.

She was the most dutiful of daughters, the most submissive of younger sisters; but it was of no avail.

Mrs. White treated her outwardly with cold civility, but Rosaline could hardly accomplish even this. There were times when it seemed to poor little Dolly that her sister hated her.

"Well," said Mrs. White, breaking off her conversation, as she always did at Dolly's approach, "have you been to church? What sort of place is it? Were there many decent people?"

"They all behaved very well. It is a beautiful church, and the boys sang well."

"Dolly, you are a simpleton!" cried her mother, bitterly. "You know perfectly what I mean! Were there any gentlefolks there?"

"I didn't see. There was one waggonette waiting for a large family. I suppose they were well off, the servants were in livery."

"Lord Glendale," said Mrs. White to Rosaline, with a nod of triumph. "Well, who else?"

"I didn't notice."

"You are no more use than an idiot! You can go and have your lunch. Rosaline and I breakfasted late, and will not require a substantial meal such as your unrefined appetite demands."

Lunch was ready in the dining-room. Bread and butter and cheese. Mrs. White had no notion of wasting delicacies on Dolly; but the girl was hungry, and contrived to make a meal. Then, knowing she would not be wanted indoors, she put on her hat and went into the garden.

The grounds of the Lindens sloped down to the river, and Dolly, who had lived very little in England, and knew nothing of the law of trespass, soon left their own boundaries behind, and sauntered along the river's bank towards the village, quite forgetting she

might be crossing some private grounds in the transit.

The Vicar's wife, with her two-year-old son clinging to her hand, was sitting in her own garden which, like that of the Lindens, led down to the water. Seeing the little figure in the distance, and knowing that the path was not safe for walking much farther, she hurried down to intercept the little trespasser.

"I think you are a stranger here. May I warn you? The path is so narrow after here, that it is not safe for you to walk there."

Dolly blushed crimson.

"I am so sorry. I thought it led to the village."

"It leads nowhere. The gardens about here mostly slope down to the water, but ours is the last. Then comes the police station and other public buildings; and I suppose they didn't appreciate scenery, for they put up a high fence, and only left such a narrow space beyond, that it would not be safe to walk on."

A light broke on Dolly, who was not so stupid as her mother believed her.

"I am afraid I have been trespassing. I had no idea I was doing wrong."

"I think you have been trespassing; but I assure you, just here, where the grounds are ours, you are very welcome. If you wanted to go home by the village, would you like to go through our garden, and come out opposite the churchyard gates? I think," added Mrs. Dean, kindly, "that I am speaking to Miss White?"

"I should like it very much. But I am not Miss White. I am only Dolly."

The "only" told a good deal to a keen wit like Mrs. Dean's. But she said nothing, and led the way through the paddock to the beautiful old-fashioned garden.

"How lovely!" cried Dolly. "I don't think I ever saw such trees before!"

"Ah! we are very proud of them; and, indeed, all Monkhaven is famous for oaks. You have some very fine ones at the Lindens. Is Mrs. White pleased with the house?"

"I—I think so."

Mary felt puzzled. Was the girl frightened, or really stupid?

"I am hoping to come and call to-morrow with my husband," she said, kindly. "We shall improve our acquaintance then."

"Oh, I never see visitors," said Dolly, frankly. "Mother says I am so stupid, and Rosaline hates school-girls. But I should have liked to see you very much, Mrs. Dean."

"Are you still busy with lessons?"

"Oh, no. It is months since I opened a lesson book. But mother says two girls are too many to take about, and so I must stay in the background."

"Then they will not miss you," said Mary Dean, good-naturedly. "And if you are to be kept in the background, we need not stand on ceremony. Will you stay and drink tea with me to-day? We always have it early on Sundays, and the Vicar will be home directly."

A servant was even then arranging a table under the shade of a mulberry tree. Dolly, whose lonely life was rarely brightened by kindness, accepted the invitation frankly. Mrs. Dean left her to Willy's care for a moment, and went to give an order to the maid.

Had the Vicar's wife known that Viscount Hubert, instead of going home, had lingered in the study looking over some old manuscripts, perhaps she would not have given that invitation.

She was very much surprised when presently he came out through the French windows, and joined the little group under the mulberry tree.

There was no help for it. Mary was obliged to introduce her visitors, and then, hoping devoutly Lady Glendale would not hear of that little tea party, she dismissed the matter from her mind, and tried to make

the lonely little stranger feel at home, in which she succeeded so well that when the Vicar appeared he found the second Miss White seated on the grass threading daisies with his son and heir.

They all spent a very pleasant hour under the mulberry tree. Dolly responded to Mrs. Dean's kindness as a flower opens to the sunshine.

All thought of her being "stupid" was dismissed from the brain of the Vicar's wife, who decided the lovely child was one of the brightest and most charming girls she had ever met. Only, though Dolly uttered not a word of complaint, perhaps her very silence was prejudicial to her mother and sister. Mrs. Dean was quick to pass judgments, and before Dolly said good-bye she had quite decided Mrs. and Miss White must be objectionable because they did not appreciate this sweet-faced child.

"Well?"

The Vicar had gone to the front gate with his stranger guest. Mrs. Dean and Lord Hubert were alone. Mary looked full into the young man's face as she launched her brief inquiry.

"She is lovely!" he answered, promptly.

"Precisely," agreed Mrs. Dean. "She is a lady to her finger-tips, and a dear little girl into the bargain; but there is some mystery about her family. What is it?"

"I don't see that there is any mystery," said Percy, slowly. "One has often heard of a mother making favourites before. I don't suppose your organ-blower is a judge of beauty, Mrs. Dean; but if Miss White is better looking than her sister she must be a paragon!"

"I like Dolly."

Lord Hubert smiled.

"And no doubt you will like the others when you see them. I am glad my mother is going to call. The girls will be nice companions for Miss White and her sister."

"She said very little about her past," said Mrs. Dean, slowly.

"My dear Mary," chimed in the Vicar, quietly, coming up at that moment, "what past could she have, poor little thing! She was in a French convent till last Christmas!"

"But she was only there five years."

"No. That is a mistake. She told me just now she had not spent a summer in England since she was five years old. She went to the convent when her father died, and she only left it last year!"

"And was Miss White there too?"

"I asked her, and she said, oh no, her mother could not spare Rosaline. I own I am rather anxious to see Mrs. White."

The curiosity was gratified the next day, for Mr. and Mrs. Dean were the first callers at the Lindens, and found the widow and her elder daughter ensconced in the drawing-room waiting for visitors. There was no trace of Dolly, and neither mother nor sister mentioned her.

"I hope you like the house," said Mary, feeling rather at a loss for conversation. "We think it very pretty, and Lady Glendale always says the gardens produce better fruit than she can get at the Castle."

"Then you know Lady Glendale?"

Mrs. Dean could have smiled at the question. She saw through everything. As a poor clergyman's wife she would have been just tolerated by the Whites. If she were a friend of the Countess she would be regarded very differently.

"My father, Lord Delaney, is Lady Glendale's first cousin, so I have known her more or less all my life. My husband and Viscount Hubert were college friends, so since I came here we have been very intimate with the Castle family."

Mrs. White's manner changed as though by magic. Lord Delaney's daughter deserved a very different degree of cordiality from the wife of a country clergyman.

"It must have made things very pleasant for you," she said, amiably.

"Oh, I don't think we depend on the Castle for society," returned Mary, wickedly. "There are numbers of nice families within easy distance. Fred and I have almost more invitations than we can accept."

"Ah," Mrs. White was quite conquered now, "you see, we have lived so much out of England that I have lost sight of many friends. I came to Monkhaven thinking it would be a quiet resting-place before I introduced my daughter in London next spring. Rosaline ought by rights to have 'come out' earlier; but there were reasons, family reasons, which made me wish to keep her in retirement until she was twenty-one."

It was on Mrs. Dean's lips to remark that Miss White must be very near that age; but she was prudent, and only asked if the young lady had been delicate.

"She is very fragile, but I think her health is perfectly established now. My second girl is a perfect little hoyden. She has been allowed to run wild, but when Rosaline is married will be time enough to think of Dolores."

"I should like to see her," and not knowing whether Dolly had mentioned yesterday's tea party, Mary was silent on that subject.

"It is very kind of you, but she is practising. I insist on her keeping up her music. Poor child! she will need some accomplishment, for she will have to make her own way in the world. It seems hard that two sisters should be so unequally provided for, but one cannot control these things. Rosaline inherits a splendid fortune from her godfather, but Dolores is portionless."

The neat parlourmaid now announced Lady Glendale and Lady Alberta Hubert. Very soon after, the Deans took their leave.

"As for Mrs. White, I simply detest her!" was Mary's outburst, as soon as they were clear of the Lindens. "What did you think of the daughter, Fred?"

"Come, Molly, don't be prejudiced."

His wife laughed.

"I am waiting for an answer, Fred."

"Well, if you must have it, I think her intellect does not equal her face. She is just like a pretty wax doll, and has about as many ideas. She told me the country here was lovely, and then admitted she had not been out."

"She is a great heiress."

"Indeed!"

"I have her mother's word for it. Rosaline is fragile, fascinating, and will have an enormous fortune. Dolores is a little hoyden who has no portion, and will have to make her own way in the world. Miss White is to 'come out' next spring, when she is of age. Dolores is to continue a hoyden until her sister's marriage sets Mrs. White free to attend to her."

"Well," said the Vicar, dryly, "on the whole, Molly, I think I like hoydens."

"So do I. Fred, Mrs. White took much more interest in me when she discovered I could count kindred with the Huberts."

"Molly, aren't you too severe?"

"I don't think so."

"Mrs. White was ladylike and has nice manners," said the Vicar, thoughtfully, "but I don't think she is quite—quite—"

"She is not a lady born," said Molly, catching the meaning her husband could not put into words, and helping him out, "but she acts the part of one very cleverly. I wonder what the father was like?"

"Probably Dolly takes after him. Miss White and her mother are the same type."

"I would give something to know how the widow entertains Lady Glendale. Will she tell her of Miss Rosaline's enormous fortune, and will the Countess come to the conclusion Percy had better cultivate her?"

"Percy will have a voice in that matter."

But Mrs. Dean's curiosity was gratified. She was standing in her garden a little later when the Castle carriage passed by, and Lady

Glendale stopped the coachman, alighted, and came indoors. Perhaps she felt she had spoken too bitterly of the Whites on Saturday, and wished to counteract what she had then said.

"I think Charles might have done worse," she said, as she accepted a cup of tea. "Mrs. White is a very distinguished-looking woman, and her husband was a magistrate."

"Did she tell you so?"

"I never ask people personal questions," said the Countess, tartly. "I heard yesterday from a friend who knew her in Italy. She asked me to call on Mrs. White, assuring me I should find her a charming neighbour. My friend added she was the widow of a magistrate, and possessed enormous wealth."

"I rather fancy the wealth is her daughter's."

"Which one?"

"The one you saw to-day. Her godfather left her an enormous fortune, but I do not believe the rest of the family are well off."

"Ah, and she is a pretty girl!"

"Very pretty!"

"I shall give a garden party next month," said the Countess, "and ask the Whites. It will be a good opportunity of introducing them to the neighbourhood, and," with a little hesitation, "if you should hear any more particulars of them you might let me know."

Mary Dean sat down and had a hearty laugh when her aristocratic visitor had departed. She saw through Lady Glendale's schemes so perfectly, and they were so amusing.

It was hardly pleasant, though, to have Hubert enter unannounced—he was quite at home at the Vicarage, and often came in through the French windows—and demand the cause of her merriment.

"Please don't ask me."

He smiled.

"I met my mother at the gate, and she stopped to give me a glowing description of her visit to the Lindens. Is it possible you are laughing at the sudden change of her views regarding the Whites?"

"Perhaps I am."

Lord Hubert sat down.

"Well, you know, it's much pleasanter she should take to them. Monkhaven has always been such a sociable place, it would be awkward to have one of the best houses in the neighbourhood socially tabooed because my mother thought the people not good enough for her august notice."

"Of course," agreed Mrs. Dean, "only I have taken an unmitigated dislike to Mrs. White and her daughter."

"Not to the one who was here yesterday?"

"Oh, no. To the heiress."

Lord Hubert's face fell. Given an aristocratic bachelor with narrow means and a clever, worldly mother, it mostly happens that the former will have heard so much of "heiresses" that the very word grows distasteful to him.

For ten years poor Lord Hubert had been told it was his "duty to marry;" for ten years the Countess had been recommending various richly-dowered maidens to him; till, poor fellow! he shunned his home as much as possible; and he would never have promised to spend three months at Glendale Castle but for the conviction there was not an heiress within visiting distance, while the finances of the family were at such a low ebb that a "house party" was out of the question.

"Please don't look so miserable," said Molly, pleadingly, "you make me feel so unkind; but really, Percy, I believe Mrs. White has taken the Lindens solely on your account, so you and the Countess ought to be grateful."

They were excellent friends these two. His own second cousin and the wife of his favourite comrade, Mary Dean was almost like a sister to Percy Hubert. Her house was his favourite resort when he was at the Castle, and in his heart he considered her and the Vicar as his ideal of a happy married



pair. He and Mrs. Dean possessed kindred tastes and "got on" capitally. He would rather have confided in her than in any one of his seven sisters, and so he did not resent her touching on a subject the very mention of which he usually tabooed.

"You had better say a little more," he answered, cheerfully. "You have made me resolve never to set foot in the Lindens now, so you may as well go on!"

"Don't be angry!"

"I don't think I should get angry with you, we are too old friends; besides, I would rather know all you can tell me before I go home to face my mother!"

"It isn't much. Mrs. White impressed on me that Rosaline would have an enormous fortune when she came of age, and that she was quite fancy free; also that she had accomplishments and tastes that fitted her for the highest circles!"

Percy smiled.

"And Rosaline?"

"I hardly spoke to her. She fell to Fred's share, and he pronounces her a very pretty wax doll!"

"And the pretty child who was here yesterday?"

"We did not set eyes on her, though I begged she might come in. She is, to quote her mother, a little hoyden, who has no prospects, and so is allowed to run wild!"

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. Your mother thinks Mrs. White charming, and means to give a garden party to introduce her and Rosaline to the neighbourhood."

Viscount Hubert looked at his friend thoughtfully.

"You are keeping something back."

"No."

"I am sure you are. You'd better tell me. You know my mother is impulsive and easily taken in. Do you mean these Whites are impostors, and that she would be wiser not to know them?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what is it?"

"You insist?"

"Please!"

"Then I believe there is something not quite above board. I think they may be rich, and Rosaline is very likely an heiress; but, all the same, there is something Mrs. White is keeping back. It won't hurt for your mother to know them, but I should be very sorry if I heard you were going to marry Rosaline!"

"You won't hear it; but why?"

"Because Mrs. White is at once too secretive and too communicative. Why need she tell me, an utter stranger, of her daughter's fortune, but yet say nothing of her past life beyond that she had been travelling a great many years. When Mr. White died, what position he held, or where they lived in his life-time—of all this she gave no hint."

### CHAPTER III.

THE Earl grumbled at the expense, but my lady declared it was necessary, and had her way. Cards were sent out for the garden party. Over a hundred people were invited, and the date fixed was the last Saturday in August.

Mrs. White accepted promptly, but it would be by no means her first visit to the Castle. After they returned Lady Glendale's visit, she and Rosaline had been asked to lunch, then Miss White had been to play tennis with the Ladies Hubert. In short, the acquaintance was progressing rapidly, and Mrs. White was quite content. She was ambitious and scheming, but she had one sovereign gift which many women, far better hearted, far more refined, lack. Julia White had great tact and discernment; she knew exactly how far she might go and where to stop.

She never said to the Countess: "Rosaline is an heiress, your son is poor; let them marry that her money may regild his coronet." She was too clever for that. She mentioned

casually that her child's godfather, Sir Alwyn Fortescue, had left Rosaline a hundred thousand pounds which would be hers indisputably the day she came of age. She confessed frankly she had kept the girl in retirement because she did not wish her to be married until she came into her inheritance, and admitted that her own income consisted solely of the thousand a-year paid her by the trustees for Rosaline's maintenance.

"I shall be poorer when Rosa has her own. She talks of settling five hundred a-year on me for life; but I tell her she must not be too generous. I do not care for England, and, when I have once seen my darling happily married, I shall probably return to the continent."

Lady Glendale understood perfectly. Whoever married Rosaline would have to consent to a provision for her mother; but even then, with the savings of her minority, she would bring her husband an income of several thousands. There would be no tribe of relations to interfere. In short, it sounded a splendid chance.

My lady was cautious. She went up to London for two nights, called at Somerset House, and asked to see the will of the late Sir Alwyn Fortescue. As she did not know the year of his decease, her task was rather tedious, but she felt rewarded when she read the document.

Sir Alwyn left most of his property to his brother and heir-at-law, but one hundred thousand pounds he bequeathed to two trustees to hold in trust for Rosaline, elder child of his old friend, Hugh White. They were empowered to grant an allowance not exceeding a thousand a-year to the child's father for her maintenance, and the day she came of age she might alienate as much as five hundred a-year to make a provision for her father or other relatives, but over the rest of the property she had no control. The income was to be paid to her during her life, the principal would pass at her death to her eldest son or daughter. If she died childless the money reverted to the head of the Fortescue family.

Lady Glendale went home relieved. Nothing could be clearer. The income would be enough to support Viscount Hubert and his wife in accordance with their rank.

The principal would be a nest-egg for their heir, while, even if Mrs. White felt disposed to increase the very moderate demands she had made on her daughter's wealth, Sir Alwyn's will was a sufficient reason for refusing.

My lady drew a sigh of satisfaction. With Percy married and off her mind, she would have more time to devote to her seven daughters and their establishment in life.

Alberta and Edina might be hopeless, but the five younger ones were all distinctly eligible for a wedding-ring if only anyone would come forward and offer it.

The Countess had not paid very frequent visits to the Vicarage lately. Perhaps she was conscious her projects would not receive much sympathy from Mrs. Dean, perhaps while she was arranging a *mariage de convenance* for her only son, she did not care to see much of a couple who had made a romantic love match.

Molly Dean perfectly understood my lady's absence. It was rather a relief than otherwise, for the Vicar's wife did not feel quite at ease herself. She was afraid the Countess would not approve of Lord Hubert's frequent visits to his old friends and one of the people he met there; for the acquaintance begun on that first Sunday had progressed rapidly.

The Vicarage children had taken a great fancy to Dolly White, and the little hoyden was never so happy as when she could escape from her uncongenial home to spend an hour at Mrs. Dean's.

She was very welcome to warm-hearted Molly; only the latter wondered sometimes why Lord Hubert always forsook the study and joined in the little folks' games when their new playfellow was with them.

Of Dolly, Mary Dean felt quite confident. She was innocent of any design upon the Viscount's heart. She was just a lonely girl longing for affection or sympathy; but were Percy's motives equally harmless, or had the wild idea come to him that, having been entreated for ten years to marry, he should be justified in choosing a wife?

At times Mrs. Dean feared so. He looked at little Dolly with more interest than he had ever been known to display in any girl.

He never lost a chance of meeting her, and when alone with his old friends the Deans, he had grown silent and reserved to such an extent as to justify the fancy that he might be in love.

It was the eve of the garden party. Almost four weeks had elapsed since Mrs. White arrived at the Lindens, and her ambition seemed a success.

She could boast of frequent visits to Glendale Castle. She was sure the Countess understood her wishes and shared them.

Rosaline was paired off with the Viscount on every occasion by his mother's art, and the widow's hopes ran high.

In her state of supreme satisfaction she paid no heed to her younger daughter. Dolly enjoyed more liberty than had ever been her fate before. She was free to go and come at her own sweet will; and now, on this eventful Friday, had escaped from the Lindens to spend the afternoon at the Vicarage, where a children's party had assembled to do honour to Daisy Dean's fourth birthday.

Dolly was the head spirit of the revels, the brightest, merriest of the guests. Lord Hubert, who had arrived uninvited, watched her with a look on his face which augured ill for his mother's match-making.

"Come down to the river with me," he said, as the party began to disperse, a bevy of nurses having come to pounce each on her special charge. "You can't think how beautiful the sun looks as it sets on the river. Oh, Mrs. Dean won't want you. She will be busy dismissing all these little rebels."

So they went down to the water's edge—Lord Glendale's heir and the poor little girl whom no one wanted.

She looked lovelier than ever to-day—in a white muslin which she had worn at fées in the convent, and with a blue ribbon at her throat and waist.

"Are you getting used to Monkhaven? Do you think you shall like it?"

"I like it very much. It is the prettiest place I ever was in."

He smiled, well pleased at her answer.

"We shall see you at the Castle to-morrow. I want to show you my home. Promise me you will let no one point out the lions to you but me!"

"I am not going," confessed Dolly, rather gravely. "Lady Glendale did not ask me."

"Oh, that must have been a mistake. Of course you are coming."

Dolly shook her head.

"I saw the card myself. It said Mrs. and Miss White."

"But—"

"I should liked to have seen the Castle, but I never go anywhere."

"But that is only because you are not 'out,' and everyone goes to a garden party. My youngest sister is still in the schoolroom, but she will be there with all her young friends."

"Mother wouldn't hear of it, and Rosaline was quite angry because I wanted to go."

Percy bit his lip; his feelings towards Rosaline White were far from amiable. In his own house he was coldly courteous to her; everywhere else he shunned her persistently.

"Look here, Dolly," he said, decidedly, "if you don't go it will be a monstrous shame. Why should you always be kept in the background like a naughty child? Your sister is only two years older, and she goes everywhere!"

"Rosaline is mamma's favourite."

"Anyone can see that. But you are Mrs.

White's child, too; and yet she treats you like—"he stopped for the want of words.

"I think she does not care for me because I was away so long. I was in the convent thirteen years."

"But your sister was there too," said Percy, warmly, "at least, part of the time?"

"Oh, no. Rosaline was always with mamma. They have never been parted. I think," and the girl's eyes had a strange, dreamy expression, as though her spirit were very far away,—"I think I was papa's favourite, and that they have never forgiven me."

"Can you remember him?" asked Lord Hubert, who knew the strange silence to which Mrs. White had relegated her husband.

"Perfectly. I was alone with him when he died. I was only a tiny child; but, you see, I have never had anyone to love me since. That is why I remember."

Lord Hubert pressed the little hand he held almost caressingly.

"Was he ill long?"

"I don't know. I can just remember everyone looking very grave and troubled, and mamma and Rosaline going away in a carriage. They took my little sister with them. She was only a baby. Papa came back to me, and said he only had me left, and then for days he used to go out very early and come back very late, and he used to kiss me and tell me I was his comfort. Then one day he said 'everything was settled.' I did not understand a bit, but I was glad because he was. My nurse dressed me in my best frock because papa had promised to come home early and take me out. He never came. Hours after he was brought home quite dead: he had been knocked down by a cab and killed on the spot!"

"Poor little Dolly!"

"I can just remember the funeral," went on Dolly, sadly. "There were two gentlemen who spoke kindly to me and offered to take me away; but mother said I belonged to her. Then very soon afterwards I went to the convent!"

"And were you happy?"

"Yes. Everyone was so kind. No one loved me as papa had done, but they were very good to me."

"And you saw your mother and sister?"

"I never saw them till I came to England last Christmas. I asked for my little sister, the baby mother had taken away, but she was dead. I often wish," went on Dolly, regretfully, "she had lived. Perhaps she would have cared for me; mother and Rosaline care only for each other!"

"Have you never seen any of your father's family, Dolly?"

"He had no relations at all. Mother says—oh! it makes me so angry—that he was a cruel man, and cared nothing for her comfort because he did not leave her a fortune!"

"But the two gentlemen you saw at Mr. White's funeral—would they not be your uncles?"

"Oh, no. They called mamma 'Madam,' they couldn't be any relations."

"And your old home, Dolly, whereabouts was it? There must be people there who would love you for your father's sake."

"Mother says I am mistaken, and that I never had a home in England; but, Lord Hubert, I remember it perfectly, it was close to the sea. The steamers used to go backwards and forwards to France, and all sorts of places, and we lived in the country a little way off. Our house was called Shirley."

Percy Hubert understood. The seaport was Southampton. The suburb, not the house itself, was Shirley. He looked into the girl's sweet face, and his heart ached for her. What cruel mystery had turned the mother against her.

"Dolly," he said, with a strange earnestness in his voice, "do you know why I have brought you here?"

"To see the sun set on the water."

"Age, and something else! My darling, I

am not a rich man. I cannot go to Mrs. White this minute and ask her to give you to me; but I love you with all my heart and strength. I never cared for any one till I met you, and then I think it was love at first sight. Will you trust me, Dolly, and promise that some day you will be my wife?"

"Mother thinks you will marry Rosaline," said Dolly, simply.

"I should never marry her even if I had not seen you. Dolly, my sweet, I love you. You hold the happiness of my life in your little hands. I am not rich enough to claim you now; but I will try and get a post under Government, and then I don't think Mrs. White would refuse her consent. Will you have faith in me, Dolly, and wait till I can speak to your mother? Do you think you could learn to love me, dear?"

"I love you now," whispered the sweet, girlish voice. "You have been so good to me!"

"I ask nothing better than to be 'good to you' all my days. Dolly, will you wait patiently until I can speak to your mother. I would go to Mrs. White now, only that I fear she would be angry and that her displeasure would fall on you!"

"I will wait," promised Dolly, "and I shall trust you always, only—I know mother will never let me be your wife."

"But why?" persisted Lord Hubert. "She may think your sister will marry first as she is the elder, but—"

"It is not that. Mother has made up her mind I am never to marry anyone."

Lord Hubert felt utterly bewildered.

"Why do you say so, child?"

"When I was in the convent, mother wrote to the Abbess, and asked if I could be a nun. She was so kind—the Abbess—she never even tried to persuade me. She wrote back that I had been brought up a Protestant, and that she never in her life saw any one less fitted for the religious life. She only told me when I was going to England."

"Your mother is not a Romanist?"

"Oh, no!"

"And what did she say when she got the letter from the Abbess?"

"She wrote again that as I was only five years old when I went to the convent, I could have no serious convictions; and she offered a great deal of money to the convent—fifty thousand francs—if I became a nun."

Lord Hubert took the little figure in his arms and strained her to his heart.

"You are mine now, Dolly!" he cried, fondly. "You don't belong to yourself any longer, and you can't be a nun. If Mrs. White ever speaks of it again, just send for me, and we will be married that very day, even if I have to take you to a six-roomed house with one maid of all work."

"I shouldn't mind, with you."

"Now, Dolly," pursued the young man, "remember we are engaged. It would be better to keep the secret; but if Mrs. White says one word more about the convent scheme, send me a line, and I will come and talk to her at once."

"She would make you give me up."

"My darling, I don't think she would 'make' me do anything. I am turned thirty, and have a tolerably strong will of my own."

"Ah, but she would make you want to give me up. She would tell you all my faults."

"I feel quite equal to the catalogue," was the smiling answer. "Now, Dolly, dry your eyes; and whenever you feel sad, just remember, please, that my happiness depends on you, and that I am working hard just to make a home for you."

She clung a little closer to his arm.

"Lord Hubert!"

"Percy," he corrected. "Well, my darling, what is it? Are you afraid of me?"

"No. But, please, if you get tired, will you tell me?"

"I shan't 'get tired,' you foolish child. Don't take such fancies into your head.

Whatever happens, Dolly, I shall go on loving you; and I shall never let you off your promise to marry me."

"I don't want to be let off," and she blushed crimson.

"And look here, Dolly. For some reason I can't fathom, your mother has no true motherly feeling for you. She may even try to part us; so remember, child, you are not to believe any story she tells you of my faithlessness. I shall be true to you, little one, while I live. Only death shall part you and me!"

They walked a few yards in silence, then Lord Hubert said, suddenly,—

"I shall return to London on Monday, and I may not be able to see you before I go. Dolly, my cousin Mrs. Dean is a good woman and a kind one. She and the Vicar would be true to you in any difficulty. If trouble comes, dear, if your home at the Lindens grows more desolate than it is, go straight to the Vicarage and tell the Deans you are my promised wife, then—"

But the sentence was never finished. A turn in the winding path brought them face to face with Molly. Then Lord Hubert impulsively took her into their confidence.

"You have heard my mother lament my bachelor state often enough, Mary," he said, gravely, "so you will be glad to hear I have chosen a partner for life. We are not going to announce the fact to the whole of Monkhaven just yet, but I should like you to know that Dolly has promised one day to be my wife."

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE afternoon of the garden party was gloriously fine, and several hearts beat high with expectation. Ambitious Mrs. White thought her darling scheme in a fair way to be realized; Rosaline saw herself already in fancy's eyes a peeress; while, at the Castle, Lady Glendale rejoiced at what she deemed her son's good prospects.

She had secured a *laissez-passer* with him in her boudoir directly after luncheon, and had more than hinted at her wishes. She thought his answer most dutiful.

"I assure you, mother, I have quite come round to your opinion. I am sure a man is happier married than single, and I shall do my best to enter the holy estate of matrimony as soon as possible."

What could mortal man say more? However, Lady Glendale was not quite satisfied: Percy's change of sentiments was so sudden and unexpected.

"It would not do for you to marry anyone, my dear," she said, gravely. "You must choose a wife who will do honour to your name. She should be young, attractive, and well born. Such a girl, in fact, as Miss White would satisfy my best desires."

Lord Hubert smiled. Perhaps it was wrong to deceive her—even by silence; but on the other hand he knew, if he told her the real state of the case, she would be frantic, and quite unfit to play the part of hostess to the guests so soon due; so the Viscount equivocated—even though his answer was true in letter.

"I promise you, mamma, that I will do my utmost to become Mrs. White's son-in-law. I don't at all affirm the widow herself, but I consider her daughter above all price."

The Countess was radiant. She received her guests with beaming face, imprinted a kiss of welcome on Rosaline's brow when she arrived with her mother, and was altogether so delightfully gracious that the Vicar of Monkhaven was puzzled what his wife could have meant when she refused to accompany him to the Castle.

"Make any excuse for me you like, Fred; but I can't face Lady Glendale. If Percy has told her he won't marry Rosaline White she will be furious; and if he has not told her, she will expect me to congratulate her, and the words would choke me."



"So very sorry your dear wife could not come with you. What is it," asked the Countess, graciously, "a headache?"

The Vicar was by no means adept at excuses; his wife gave him little practice. A bright, sunny-tempered woman with excellent health and spirits, this was probably the first time she had ever broken a social engagement once entered into.

"I—I don't know," said the poor man awkwardly, "she does not seem at all like herself. Her spirits are uncertain."

"Coming here would have cheered her up."

The Vicar did not wish to pursue the subject and escaped. Molly had not told him of the confidences reposed in her by the lovers, so he could only ascribe her conduct to the fact that as she particularly disliked Miss White, and believed Lord Hubert was intended to propose to her at this fête, she preferred not to be present at it.

Percy himself would gladly have quitted the gay scene. Although the Whites had not been a month in the county, the widow's ambitions for her daughter, and his mother's acquiescence, were widely known. The young man was quite aware half the guests present expected to congratulate him before they left; and as he sauntered through the grounds at Rosaline's side, he was trying in vain to think of some way (without revealing his own secret, or being pointedly rude) of conveying to the young lady that her hopes were vain.

"Is not your sister here to-day?"

It was the first time he had ever mentioned Dolly to the beautiful Rosaline, and he was curious as to her reply.

"Oh, no! She is much too young for such large parties."

"It must be very dull for her at home!"

"Her mother is the best judge of that. I am only her step-sister, and so certainly could not interfere!"

Lord Hubert felt bewildered.

"Only her step-sister! I thought you were both Miss Whites!"

"And so we are; but my father married twice, and Dolly is mamma's only child. I am sure it is a good thing for me I have a step-mother, or I should have been quite alone in the world."

"I cannot understand it. Mrs. White seems so devoted to you, and there is a strong likeness between you!"

"Nevertheless our relationship is as I have told you; but mamma was a White too. She and my father were first cousins, which perhaps explains my resemblance to her. A great many people say I am more like her than her own child. Dolly is not like anybody."

Lord Hubert felt utterly bewildered. What motive could Rosaline have in telling him a falsehood; and yet, knowing as he did the difference in the widow's treatment of the girls, how was he to believe the unloved, neglected Dolly was her own child, the idolised Rosaline her step-daughter?

"Mamma and I have always been together," went on Rosaline, "and Dolly was brought up in a convent. You see, mamma was not rich, and it was the cheapest way of educating her; of course it would not have been fair to spend my money on my half-sister."

Percy had never liked the heiress, but at that moment he came very near to hating her. How could she speak so exultingly of her own money?

The fête seemed unending to Lord Hubert, but at last it was over. The last carriage had rolled away, and he felt in another moment he should have his mother on his hands with her enquiries as to his wooing; so he went round to the stables, ordered a groom to saddle his horse, and had started for a long ride before his family had even guessed his intentions.

There was a great deal he wanted to think out—a great deal that puzzled him. He loved his little fiancée with all his heart. For Dolly's sweet sake he would even put up with Mrs. White and Rosaline, and try to make the best of them as relations; but before he

married he must try to get at the root of the mystery, and learn the secret they hid so carefully.

Ever since the Whites came to the Lindens, he had felt there was something more than met the eye in their history. His mother had told him of Sir Alwyn Fortescue's legacy to his godchild, and the peculiar proviso that she was not to alienate more than five hundred a-year as a provision for her relations; also that, during her minority, her guardian was to receive a thousand a-year for her support. It was only during his long, solitary ride that a ray of light came to Percy Hubert, and then the fraud it hinted at was so terrible he felt his new theory must be impossible. Yet it came back to him again and again—a doubt that could not be stilled.

Mrs. White, by her own showing, was poor. From Dolly's artless recollections he could well believe her husband had died making no provision for her. All her means of existence, then, would be the thousand a-year paid for the support of her little step-child.

She had spent thirteen years abroad without visiting England—or seeing her own daughter? Could this be because she knew from the first Rosaline would never reach womanhood, and, rather than lose the payment for her charge, the scheming widow had early resolved, when her step-child died, to conceal the loss and put another girl in her place? Such things had been.

It would explain a great deal. Rosaline might be Mrs. White's own niece, which would account for their resemblance. Of course their wandering life would make the fraud easy. The child of seven Mrs. White took away must alter in thirteen years. There were no relations, no close friends with inconvenient memories. The widow would have every chance of success.

Then she never spoke of her husband or the home she had shared with him. She and Rosaline had both tried to crush Dolly and make her think her remembrance of the house at Shirley an idle fancy.

"If only it was a different name," thought Lord Hubert, bitterly, "I might get a clue. But there may be a dozen Whites near Southampton."

Then came to him Dolly's assertion that her father had died from an accident and Mrs. White's one piece of information that her husband had been a magistrate. The child said distinctly that her father died in summer when she was five years old.

Percy's resolution was taken. He would go to Southampton and make inquiries. If no one at Shirley remembered the Whites, it was still almost certain the violent death of a magistrate would be in the local papers. Summer might mean from May to September. If he searched the papers for those five months of seventy-two he must surely find a clue.

Impulsive as a boy, Lord Hubert did not even announce his intention to anyone. He packed a small bag while his parents were at dinner, and caught the mail train to London, intending to go on to Southampton the next morning, and, Sunday though it was, commence his researches.

Lord Hubert knew the town pretty well, having embarked there more than once for Havre.

He put up at the South Western Hotel, determined, as soon as Monday came, to obtain a file of the local paper for eighteen seventy-two, and search for the particulars of Mr. White's death.

Meanwhile he need not be quite inactive; though all the shops were closed and the work-a-day world seemed enjoying a restful Sunday, still there was nothing to hinder him from searching the various cemeteries for Mr. White's grave, and seeing if that would throw any light on the mystery.

Of course a tombstone would not reveal much, but if the first Mrs. White were buried there the inscription would doubtless mention her maiden name, and if any relations on her

side yet survived they would be the persons most likely to help in unmasking the present Mrs. White's fraud.

After lunch Lord Hubert turned his steps in the direction of Shirley, or, more correctly, turned a horse's steps thither, for he engaged an open carriage, with a driver likely to be loquacious both from his age and genial appearance.

When they were passing through Shirley Percy stopped his Jehu, and inquired if he could remember anyone of the name of White living there some thirteen years before.

"There are heaps of Whites in this part of the world, sir," said the old man, simply. "It's quite a Hampshire name."

"The Mr. White I am interested in died by an accident. He was run over and killed on the spot. He was a magistrate, and I am particularly anxious to make inquiries respecting his family."

A look of comprehension came into the old driver's face.

"You mean Hugh White the banker, sir; but he didn't live at Shirley. His house was called Shirley Lodge right enough, but it's three miles the other side of the town. I can take you there if you wish to see it, or I can show you his grave, poor gentleman. I ought to know as much of him as anyone, seeing I was in his service when he died."

"Then you knew his wife?"

"I knew both his wives," replied the driver, gravely. "He married Miss Shirley, who brought him a handsome fortune and left him with one little girl. Then, poor gentleman, it was his misfortune to meet a woman whose heart was like a bit of stone, and, taken in by her handsome face, he was foolish enough to make her his second wife."

The fly had stopped, the horse was tranquilly eating grass. Driver and fare looked full into each other's faces.

"Look here," said Lord Hubert, frankly, "circumstances make it necessary for me to know as much as you can tell me of Mr. White and his history. I am willing to reward you liberally. But you must tell me no mere rumours, only things you know to be facts."

Jim Plunket smiled in surprise.

"Lor, sir, there's not a tradesman in the place but knows Mr. White's story. It was never a secret in this town; ay, and everyone mourned for him as a friend when he died. They called it an accident, but to my mind, sir, he was killed really before ever the wheels passed over him. They only finished the work. His heart broke when the trouble came."

And Jim told his story simply and well. It gained in pathos, perhaps from his homely language and earnest manner. Mr. White had been the leading banker of the town. His first wife brought him an enormous fortune, which was entirely at his own disposal. His second wife, a widow, brought him nothing but debts.

"And she made the money fly. Lor, sir, that woman knew how to spend. Nothing was too good for her or her own child, though they do say she grudging every penny that was spent on Miss Rose, the first Mrs. White's little girl."

This rather perplexed Lord Hubert, but he listened anxiously, feeling he was near an explanation of all that puzzled him.

"At last the master, I suppose, felt there must come a stop, and he warned her she was spending too much. Some Baronet had died and left Miss Rose a splendid fortune, but Mr. White couldn't touch it. I suppose he grew reckless being in difficulties, and he speculated. Then the crash came, the bank stopped payment."

"Mrs. White took all the property she could lay her hands on, and her own two children, Miss Julia Stone and the baby that was barely three years old; she just ran off, and left her husband and Miss Rose to bear the brunt."

"The master, he behaved splendidly. He gave up every farthing of his first wife's fortune,

even the furniture of Shirley Lodge. Every creditor was paid in full; and then, when he could hold up his head and say no one had lent a sixpence by him, he got the post of manager in a large bank near London; but it was no use. His wife's flight had just broken his heart. He would have died of grief, sir, if the wheels hadn't gone over him and crushed the very life of him."

"I suppose Mrs. White came back then?"

"She did, sir; and a mighty to do she made when she discovered that though Mr. White had made a will in her favour, as he left no money, she could claim nothing. Two gentlemen came from London, who were Miss Rose's trustees, and they agreed she should have the charge of the little girl, and receive as much as Sir Alwyn Fortescue's will allowed for her keep. Then Mrs. White and the three children went away. I knew she hated Miss Rose, and I was sore afraid there'd be hard times for the little one; but my daughter, who'd been nurse at Shirley Lodge, and was devoted to our little lady, told me I need not fear. 'Every penny of the money will be lost, father, when Miss Rose dies, so Mrs. White's one wish 'll be to keep her well and hearty.'"

"You say Mrs. White took three children away with her. Should you recognise them?"

"Well, sir, thirteen years alters most people, especially children. I've never forgotten them as they looked then. Miss Julia, the master's stepchild, was a pretty little thing with black eyes and hair, and the most spiteful temper you ever see. She was twelve years old, and the image of her mother, who was just wrapped up in her. Miss Rose favoured her papa. She was fair, and the sweetest little thing you ever saw. As for Miss Dolore's—Baby, as they called her—she was a wee mite that no one ever expected to live, and sure enough they brought her back and buried her by her father before the year was out."

Lord Hubert drew a great breath. The mystery was plain to him. Mrs. White's stepchild was not dead. She had not put a stranger in the place of the little heiress; but with a cunning, almost fiendish in its malice, she had exchanged the two girls, and passed off her beloved Julia as Sir Alwyn Fortescue's godchild. Percy understood it all. No doubt the baby Dolore's dying had paved the way. It was easy to give her name and identity to the little step sister only two years her senior, while Julia's infantile style of beauty and childish airs and graces were well suited for her to play the rôle of a rival five years younger than herself.

Mrs. White was playing a desperate game, for the two girls at the Lindens were not what she represented them.

The elder was Julia Stone, aged somewhere about twenty-six and penniless. The neglected Dolly was really Rosaline White, heiress; but how had the widow dared to risk such a monstrous fraud?

The old coachman made this plain. Both the trustees under Sir Alwyn's will were dead. Their places were filled by strangers, who had never seen the banker or either of his children. Then the widow had been born a White, and was the husband's first cousin. She doubtless resembled the White family, and so, for those who questioned and thought it strange the heiress should be like her step-mother, an answer was ready.

Lord Hubert had set out on his quest believing it might take weeks or months, and lo! a few hours had ended the mystery.

"I should like to see your daughter," he told Jim Plunkett, gravely, "and then I will tell you both why I am so interested in the Whites. You are quite certain Rosaline was fair, and her step-sister dark?"

"Why, of course I am, sir; there's no mistake about it. Miss Julia had black hair, and was the model of her mamma. Miss Rose was fair. Why, my daughter's got a little picture at home that was taken one year at the fair, and there are the two children; you couldn't be mistaken."

The nursemaid of other days was now a buxom matron, with prosperity and content written on every feature. Her husband was a sailor, and during his voyages she kept her father's house. The moment he caught sight of Mrs. Bond, Lord Hubert felt she was to be trusted. If only her memory were as good as her father's he would have no fear.

"I will tell you all I can," he began, sitting down in the cottage kitchen as though quite at home; "and for the sake of the little girl you nursed so long ago, I am sure you will help me."

"I'll help you, sir. I've never forgotten Miss Rose. Dolly her poor papa used to call her—forgetting, I suppose, that if the Baby Dolores grew up, that would be her name."

"I want you just to describe Miss Rose."

"That's easy done, sir. She'd rosy cheeks and dark golden curls; I don't mean flaxen, but just the colour of a sovereign; and she was as fair as a lily. Oh, sir, have you seen her?"

"A Mrs. White has taken my uncle's house, and brought two young ladies with her. The elder is dark and pretty; she is called Rosaline, and is a great heiress. Mrs. White seems just to worship her. The younger, Dolly, just answers to your description, Mrs. Bond, only she is a lonely, neglected child."

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Bond, heartily. "I always did say the mistress was a deep one. Why, she's just changed the children!"

"You would be ready to swear to what you have told me, in a court of law?"

"That I would, sir. But you won't need that. If you just give a hint to Sir Alan Fortescue and Dr. Moberly, the trustees, they'll soon put things right."

"I thought you said the trustees were dead?"

"Yes, sir. But each of them named a successor. Sir Alan is a fine young gentleman as ever stepped, and the Doctor has a grand head for business."

Not till he got back to his hotel did Lord Hubert realize that if his researches were successful his little *fiancée* would be the thing he had always hated—a great heiress.

#### CHAPTER V., AND LAST.

THE library at Fortescue Towers, and Percy awaiting with what patience he could Sir Alan's return from a drive. They were not strangers, having met several times in London. But there was no great intimacy between them. The young Baronet was one of the richest commoners of the day; the Viscount, for his rank, a poor man!

"Hubert," cried Sir Alan, with hearty welcome, as he greeted his guest, "this is good of you to look me up. I had no idea you were in the neighbourhood!"

"I am only here on business, Sir Alan, and no one can assist me but yourself. My mission is a strange one. You may think me impatient and interfering, but I felt bound to come."

"My dear fellow," said the Baronet, cheerfully, "you would be welcome, whatever brought you. We'll have lunch first, and discuss the business afterwards. I'm not likely to impute wrong motives to you, though I confess I can't imagine how I can help you."

After lunch the two young men returned to the library, and Lord Hubert plunged into his business.

"I believe you are one of Miss White's trustees under your late uncle's will?"

"I am one of the trustees; but Mrs. White annoyed me so much, that I have left Doctor Moberly full power to do as he likes. I sign whatever is presented to me, on condition I am not required to see Miss White and her ambitious mamma."

"May I ask how Mrs. White offended you?"

The Baronet blushed like a girl.

"I've plenty of money, Hubert, and, if I hadn't, I'm not the sort of fellow to grudge my

uncle having left a fortune to his godchild. Two years ago Mrs. White wrote to me suggesting that I doubtless felt aggrieved at so large a sum passing away from the Fortescue's. Her daughter was nineteen and fancy free, pretty, amiable, and accomplished; would it not be a happy solution of the difficulties if I married her sweet Rosaline? I was simply furious, and replied, 'there were no difficulties, and I was not a marrying man.'"

"She is a clever woman!"

"I suppose so. Now, how can I help you?"

Percy poured out his story.

"I know I am liable to be put down as a fortune-hunter," he said, gloomily, as he finished, "since I am engaged to the younger girl, and of course, if my suspicions are right, she becomes a great heiress; but I assure you, Fortescue, it was not that which influenced me. The air of mystery which hung over Mrs. White bewildered me. I felt she would be bitterly against my union with Dolly, and I hoped if only I could discover her secret, it would give me a certain hold over her."

Sir Alan smiled.

"I believe you are quite right—and by my uncle's will, Rosaline White is free to keep her fortune, even if she marries without her parents' consent. I'll see you through with it, Hubert. If there's an inn I can put up at anywhere near Monkshaven, I'll come down and reason with the widow."

"You won't let her guess our suspicion—if we speak too soon, she may vent her malice on Dolly!"

"My dear fellow, I'll be careful. As a fact, Rosaline Shirley (she first Mrs. White) and my mother were first cousins. I suppose I am the only kinsman, on her mother's side, that Miss White (the real one) possesses. It is an open secret that my uncle Sir Alwyn worshipped Miss Shirley. There are pictures of her in my possession, and one painting of her child received by my uncle shortly before his death. I'll take that with me to Monkshaven, and see what Mrs. White says to it."

"You must be our guest," urged Lord Hubert. "My mother will feel hurt if you stay anywhere but at the Castle."

"Does the Countess approve of your engagement?"

"She is hopelessly infatuated with Mrs. White and the false heiress. I have not dared to tell her of my wooing, Dolly."

"Dr. Moberly is abroad for his annual holiday," observed Sir Alan, "but he is a sensible fellow, and will hear reason."

"I return to-night, Sir Alan Fortescue with me!" was the telegraphic message which reached the Castle on Tuesday, filling the Countess with bewilderment. Why had her son rushed off, directly after the *fête*, without a word of his intention? Why should he bring a comparative stranger as his guest; but then Sir Alan came of an old family, and was almost a millionaire. He was, report said, fancy free, so Hubert's eccentricity might end in his sisters' gain.

The two elder ladies at the Lindens had been as much perturbed at Lord Hubert's departure as his mother. Dolly trusted her lover, and knew he had left her for some sufficient cause; but Mrs. White and Rosaline were simply furious at what augured a defeat for their hopes.

The Countess of Glendale received Sir Alan with *empressment*, and begged he would stay at the Castle as long as he could spare time. Hubert had left the task of the enlightenment to his companion, and Alan plunged into the work at once.

"I am a little afraid, Lady Glendale, that when you know my business here you won't feel so hospitably towards me. I told Hubert I had better go to the village inn, lest you should resent my mission; but he overruled my scruples."

"Quite right!" replied my lady, thinking what a good-looking fellow he was, and how



she should like him for a son-in-law; "but, Sir Alan, if you will pardon feminine curiosity, I should like to know your mission!"

He smiled. Few women had ever resisted Alan Fortescue's smile.

"I want to undeceive some people on whom a cruel fraud has been practised. I am given to understand that someone is representing herself in this neighbourhood as my ward, a young lady to whom my uncle, Sir Alwyn Fortescue, left a large fortune—and I wish to unearth the deception."

Lady Glendale's heart nearly stood still.

"You cannot mean the Whites? Oh, Sir Alan, I have introduced them to all my friends. I have had Rosaline here constantly, and almost begged Hubert to propose to her. Oh, surely I have not been deceived. You can't be going to tell me they are just a couple of adventuresses!"

Sir Alan was touched by her eagerness.

"They have taken an unfair advantage of your kindness, and if the fraud they contemplated had succeeded they might have been indicted for felony, but at present I believe the wrong has not gone so far but that I can put it straight."

"I don't understand," said the Countess, frankly. "Mrs. White is so very elegant, and has been used to the best society. Surely you are not implying she is not respectable?"

"She is perfectly respectable in the sense you mean, dear Lady Glendale. She is the widow of Hugh White, a banker, who, though he died penniless, left a name still honoured and revered in his native town. Mrs. White is heartless, scheming, and mercenary. She has brought herself within reach of the law, but not in the way you suppose. She has not robbed a house or forged a cheque. She has only palmed off a penniless girl, called Julia Stone, on Monkhaven society, as an heiress."

Lady Glendale started.

"But your uncle's will was so clear. I read it myself."

Sir Alan checked any amusement he felt.

"The will is clear enough and the fortune is in safe keeping; but, Lady Glendale, the girl you have known as the heiress has no claim on it. She has stolen the name and identity of another. She is not Rosaline White but Julia Stone, the only child of Mrs. White's first marriage."

Lady Glendale shivered.

"Are you quite sure?"

"I have brought proofs with me. I can produce living witnesses who will recognise the young lady as Julia Stone; but for the sake of her dead husband, I hope Mrs. White will accept defeat quietly, and not force me to expose her publicly."

"It will give you another fortune," said the Countess, thinking fate cruelly unjust to heap riches on Sir Alan who was already so wealthy. "I remember the money reverts to you at Rosaline's death."

"It won't give me another penny, for Rosaline is not dead. My ward has been robbed of name and identity. Her interests have been neglected. She has led a lonely uncareful life, but it has failed to impair her health or beauty. Lady Glendale, will you do me a kindness when I rescue the real Rosaline from her step-mother? will you receive her here, and suffer her to remain in your care until I can give her to the husband of her choice?"

It was a very stormy interview between Sir Alan Fortescue and Mrs. White. The widow would not give up the prize she had schemed for for years, without a fight.

She denied in toto everything her accuser said; talked of appealing to Dr. Moberly, of putting the case in chancery, and, in fact, was as furious as an angry woman could well be. Sir Alan kept perfectly calm; only when she passed for breath he delivered his ultimatum.

"It rests with you, Mrs. White, whether you retire from this struggle with such savings as you may have secured from the thirteen thousand pounds paid over to you for your step-

child's maintenance, and your freedom, or whether you are stripped of every penny of your ill gotten gains, and, with your daughter, sent to prison."

"I—I don't understand!"

"I will speak more plainly. You have been guilty of fraud and conspiracy, and of obtaining money by false pretences. The plain name for these crimes is felony, and the punishment a prison!"

"It is absurd," cried Mrs. White, "making such a fuss. I have never had a penny more than the law entitled me to. What harm has been done?"

"The will gave you a thousand a year to 'make a home for Miss White.' How about the years you left her in a French convent, at a cost of perhaps ten pounds a term? You have since twice attempted to make your own daughter the wife of an honourable man, representing her in each case as the heiress, Rosaline White."

"What do you want?"

"I want nothing. You are free to make your choice. Sign this paper, acknowledging your deception, and leave the Lindens to-day, taking with you all your possessions, or else—"

"I am waiting for your alternative."

"Or else the detective, who is waiting outside—and who holds a warrant signed by Lord Glendale, the nearest magistrate—will take you and Miss Stone into custody on a charge of fraud."

He held the winning cards. Julia White, half beside herself with jealous rage, signed the paper. Before nightfall the Lindens was deserted, and Sir Alan escorted his ward to Glendale Castle, and placed her under the special care of the Countess.

Percy Hubert greeted his darling warmly. Only, he protested, her great wealth was a terrible barrier between them; but Dolly (she begged that no one would call her Rosaline) thought otherwise, and reminded him how he had promised nothing but death should part them.

"I will not have my pretty cousin jilted," said Sir Alan, coming to the rescue. "Besides, I have sent for Dr. Moberly on purpose to give his consent to the wedding. There are no settlements to draw, because my uncle's will has already settled Dolly's fortune on herself. I will lend you Fortescue Towers for the honeymoon, and, if you take my advice, you will become the next tenant of the Lindens. I hear Mrs. White has sent the keys to Mr. Hubert's agent, quite forgetting such a trifling formality as the rent."

The Countess was delighted with Dolly, and declared she would have welcomed her as her daughter-in-law had she been penniless—a statement whose truth, Percy always feels thankful, they will never need to test.

His love conquered his pride, and as he had wooed Dolly when she was only a lonely little girl, with no money or friends, he did not feel compelled to give her up because fortune had smiled on her.

They were married in the beautiful old church where Lord Hubert had first seen Dolly and lost his heart to her.

Mr. Dean performed the service, and his wife dressed the bride.

Molly was delighted with the dénouement of the romance begun in the Vicarage gardens that Sunday afternoon; and was privately of opinion that this first wedding in Lady Glendale's family would not be the last, for the best man, Sir Alan Fortescue, seemed decidedly taken with Lady Alberta, who, despite her twenty-seven years, had been persuaded to enact the part of chief bridesmaid.

Mrs. Dean was perfectly right, and Lady Alberta now reigns at Fortescue Towers, where she and Alan rival in their happiness the felicity of Lord and Lady Hubert, whose home is at the Lindens, and whose neighbours describe them as an ideal couple.

And no one at Monkhaven ever heard again of AMBITIOUS MRS. WHITE.

[THE END.]

WOMAN is a subject never mentioned in Morocco. It would be a terrible breach of etiquette to ask a man after his wife or wives.

An early riser's outfit is one of the recent electrical novelties. It has a decided advantage over the old alarm clock, which would run down and allow the early riser to take another nap. The electrical outfit does not need any winding. It keeps up its nerve-grating jangle for two hours, unless turned off. The early riser is bound to get out of bed and out off the current. And then, of course, the purpose is accomplished; the early riser, having arisen and duly "caused" the alarm, remains up for the remainder of the day.

The sign of negation, with us and a few other peoples is a shake of the head from left to right. In Greece it is a toss of the head backwards; or, in other words, a slight jerk upwards of the chin, while John Chinaman waves his hand and outspread fingers between his own face and that of the speaker, as if to wall out, as it were, the thought, and prevent its incoming on any side. Again, in England we have an "adieu;" in Wales, and not infrequently in Egypt, the "farewell" is given by pawing the air with the hands, the palms outwards; while a Celt, in bidding one "good-bye," uses a not dissimilar gesture. Franks, Turks, Greeks, and Armenians have all a different kind of shrug to express their ignorance or carelessness about anything each being unlike our own gesture; and Turk and Turkoman show their liking of an object by holding up the hand, with the tips of the fingers drawn closely together—a sign more easily and gracefully simulated than the start of surprise, the uplifted eyebrows, and the semi-idiotic smile we in this country are expected to bestow on the achievements of our friends. The language of signs is in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean carried to an extent of which an ordinary Englishman can form no conception.

INTERESTING FACTS CONCERNING THE BIBLE.

—The number of letters in the Bible is 3,586,499; words, 773,692; verses, 31,173; chapters, 1,189; books, 66. The word "and" occurs 46,277 times; the word "Lord," 1,885 times; the word "reverend," but once, which is in the 9th verse of the 111th Psalm; the word "Jehovah" is used 5,845 times; the word "girl" but once, and that in the 3rd verse of the 3rd chapter of Joel; "grandmother" is found only in 2nd Timothy, 1st chapter 5th verse; and an iron bedstead is described in the 11th verse of the 3rd chapter of Deuteronomy. The longest book in the Old Testament is Psalms, it having 150 chapters; the shortest is Obadiah, it having but one chapter of only 21 verses. The longest books in the New Testament are Matthew and The Acts, each of which consists of 28 chapters, although Luke contains more verses and words. Third John is the shortest, containing 1 chapter of 14 verses, and 296 words. The longest chapter in the Old Testament is the 119th Psalm—it contains 176 verses; the shortest chapter is the 117th Psalm—it contains but two verses. The longest chapter in the New Testament is the 1st chapter of Luke—it contains 80 verses; the shortest is 1st John, 1st chapter—it contains 10 verses. The longest verse in the Old Testament is the 9th verse of the 8th chapter of Esther—it contains 90 words, composed of 426 letters; the shortest verse is the 25th verse of the 1st chapter of 1st Chronicles, consisting of 12 letters and three words. The middle verse is the 8th verse of the 118th Psalm. The finest chapter to read is the 26th chapter of Acts. The 19th chapter of 2nd Kings and 37th chapter of Isaiah read alike. The 8th, 15th, 21st, and 31st verses of the 107th Psalm are alike. All of the verses of the 136th Psalm end alike. "Eternity" is spoken of only once—Isaiah, 57th chapter 15th verse. There are no names of more than 6 syllables. The book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and the 21st verse of the 7th chapter of Ezra contains all the letters of the alphabet with the exception of "j."

## FACETIE.

MEN may be lords of creation, but some women beat all creation.

LADIES do not love to grow old, and yet they're the very first to adopt new wrinkles.

MANY now occupying back seats in this world may occupy the front seat in the next.

MARRIAGE may be a civil contract, but some people behave in a very uncivil manner after entering into it.

AN Irishman too early wed declared he would never marry so young again if he lived to be as old as Methuselah.

THE value of a compliment lies in its placing. "Heart of oak" is more pleasantly received than "wooden head."

"What a time you've been about that egg, Mary?" "Yes, ma'am; but the new kitchen-cloak has such large minutes."

A MAN always likes to be considered No One, but it makes him mad to see himself mentioned in a paper as "one Smith."

"No, sir," said the shoe manufacturer, "I can't sell the goods at that price; I'm a shoe-maker, not a freebooter."

INSINUATING TOURIST: "Have you a drink of butter-milk, darling?" Pretty dairymaid: "Yes, but we want it for our own pig."

ON the balcony. He (who has just obliged): "I love to hear the birds sing." She: "Yes; and the best of them is they always choose something they can sing."

"Ah, how do you do, Miss Green?" "Very well, thank you; but my name is Brown." "Oh, I beg pardon; so it is. But you'll excuse me, I'm sure—I'm colour-blind."

NO one notices the flight of time so much as the man who puts his hand into his pocket for his watch and finds that it has really flown.

IT was pretty nearly 11.30 P.M. when he began to sing "How can I leave thee?" to his best girl. Pretty soon her papa came downstairs, and he found out how easy it was.

"What are you reading, dear?" "A letter from mother, John." "What does she say?" "Oh, nothing!" "That isn't like your mother, is it?"

SPACE REPORTER: "Can't you give me something to write up to-day?" City Editor: "Haven't a thing." Space Reporter: "Well, then, give me somebody to write down."

"Now, boys," said the Sunday school Superintendent, "what shall I tell you about this morning?" "The sluggin' match 'tween David and 'n' Gerlier," cried the infant class.

ETHEL: "It is impossible to love more than one man at a time with sincerity." Maud: "True; but, thank heaven, we can have more than one man love us sincerely at a time."

"THERE!" said the toy-man to Billie's father. "That drum's the finest in the market. It can't be beat." "I'll take it. A drum that can't be beat is just the thing for my boy."

TRAVELLER: (trying to write his name on a hotel register)—"This is a historic hostelry, I believe?" Host (proudly): "Yes, sir, one of the oldest hotels in this section, sir." "So I supposed, from the pens."

PONSONBY (somewhat boastfully): "I may say, Miss Bismarck, that I am quite an adept at athletics. I can row, ride, swim, spar, jump and run." "Here comes papa. Do let me see you jump and run?"

"Or course you learned to swim while at the seashore, Dr. Dorbe?" "I spent an hour in the water every day trying to, but the truth is, Miss Wist, I never succeeded in doing more than making my head swim."

"My wife is a lecturer and I am an entertainer," said Hobbs. "Indeed? I knew your wife appeared in public, but I did not know that you ever did." "Oh, I don't. I stay at home and entertain the baby."

"WHY is this boat backing up?" asked the passenger on the steamer? "Oh," said the mate, "the captain's wife and baby are on board, and the baby wouldn't go to sleep until he'd seen the engines reversed."

MRS. MAGUIRE (to undersized policeman): "So yez has a warrant for running me in, 'av' yez? Now, young man, allow me to ax how yez intind goin' along wid me. Shall I carry you, or will you have an ambulance?"

"Don't you want me to buy you some neckties, Charlie?" "Yes, Alice, my love, I am about as anxious to have you buy me some neckties as you would be to have me buy your spring bonnet for you."

MISS OLDTIMER: "You play tennis very well for one who has played so little." Miss Newcomer: "Thanks. I shall be glad when I can play as well as you do; but I suppose it takes years and years of practice."

HER WAY OF SAYING IT.—"I put in a month at Long Beach one season," said Miss Bleeker. "I inserted several weeks there myself a year or two ago," replied Miss Emerson.

"THERE are times," said the professional thinker of thoughts, "when man is made to realize his limitations, and is filled with utter despair." "Yes," replied Jungpoppe, "that's just the way I felt when my baby wanted me to give him the moon."

MISS PARSA (of uncertain age): "Te he! I don't know whether to go into the surf or not. Some folks say the salt water makes wrinkles." Old fisherman: "No, mum, it's just the other way, mum. Salt water takes wrinkles out, mum. Just you try it an' see."

THE HEIGHT OF IMPROPRIETY.—Miss Grundison, Jr.: "There goes Lucy Holroyd, all alone in a boat with young Snipson, as usual! So imprudent of them!" Her elder sister: "Yes; how shocking if they were upset and drowned—and without a chaperon, you know!"

ARTIST: "Here is a very suitable picture, Mr. Gibbs. It represents the Rev. Mr. Goss, the missionary, in the centre of a group of cannibals." Deacon Gibbs: "I see the cannibals, Mr. Turps, but where is the missionary?" "Didn't I just tell you that he was in the centre of the cannibals?"

"My dear," said the husband to the wife before the glass, "I am ashamed to see you put all that red stuff on your cheeks." "Oh, don't worry about that," she replied, sweetly. "It matches the colour on your nose admirably, and harmony is what makes the marriage relations ideal."

"MISS ETHEL is a long time coming down," said the youth to the servant, after waiting some time for the young lady's appearance. "Perhaps," he added, with a laugh, "she is making up her mind whether to see me or not." "No," said the servant, with an icy smile, "it isn't her mind she is making up."

LITTLE TOMMY was making a dreadful racket playing that he was a locomotive letting off steam, ringing a bell, etc. "Tommy," said his aunt, getting in front of him, "you must stop this noise." Tommy stood perfectly quiet for a minute, and then said, "The engineer is waiting for the old cow to get off the track."

TIME ENOUGH TO BELLER.—One day Billy, that's my brother, he and Sammy Doppy was playin' by a mud-hole, and Billy he said, "Now, Sammy, les play we was a barnyard; you be the pig and he down and woller, and I'll be the bull and beller like everything." So they got down on their hands and knees, and Sammy he went in the dirt and woller, while Billy bellered like distant thunder. Bimeby Sammy he cum out muddy—you never seen such a muddy little feller—and he said, "Now, you be the pig, an' let me teller." But Billy he said, "I ain't a very good pig except for dinner, and little be time 'nuff for you to beller when your mother sees yer close."

BE content with your lot, especially if it's a lot of money.

THE knife-grinder ought not to be out of work in dull times.

THERE is no better exercise than rowing, providing the other man is at the oars.

EVEN the strictest vegetarian believes it is meet that he should eat.

IF the eyes were really windows to the heart, green goggles would become extremely fashionable.

AT Brighton, First Miss: "Are you engaged to Harry—I mean Mr. Johnson?" Second Miss: "Yes; are you?"

CORA: "Isn't Simpson a man after your heart?" DORA (firmly): "I'm told he is, but he'll not win it."

THE spider's hospitality is unquestionable. So long as a guest remains, her table is always bountifully supplied.

THE most confirmed skeptic will take your word for it if you point a gun at his head and tell him it is loaded.

THE world may forgive us for being weak and foolish, but it never condones our superiority. That is the unpardonable crime.

THE man who can hang pictures under supervision for an hour does not want to be an angel; he is already one.

"JONES thinks he knows everything." "He does, does he? I guess he never had a little son that asked him questions."

FOOTLIGHTS: "Why don't you try to write an original drama?" BOSSER: "How can I? I do not know a single foreign language."

CUSTOMER (paying for a shampoo): "Yours is the crowning work of art." DIGNIFIED barber: "Yes, sir; men in my profession stand at the head. Next."

SHOP ASSISTANT: "You see, mum, although the red predominates, the white predominates more so, and yet the blue predominates most of all."

DAIRYMAN (to applicant for situation): "You have had experience, have you?" Applicant: "Oh, yes, Mr. Urvin." "On which side of the cow do you sit to milk?" "The outside, sir."

"WHY do you permit such impudence?" said the Pullman traveller to his companion, after a quarrel with the porter. "Can't help it. He's the porter. I'm only a director in the company."

BLANK (examining his portrait just painted by Professor Faillémont from Paris): "Professor, I do not know how it is, but neither you nor any artist whom I have ever met has been able to catch the expression of my face." "Ah, meester Blank, zat is vary true; but," shrugging his shoulders, "zat so expression ces not rare, how can you catch him?"

A LITTLE eight-year-old Irish boy in one of our public schools was reproved by his teacher for some mischief. He was about to deny his fault, when she said, "I saw you, Jerry." "Yes," he replied, as quick as a flash, "I tells thim there ain't much you don't see wid thim purty black eyes of yours." That was the soft answer that turned away wrath; for what lady could resist so graceful a compliment.

THE clock had just struck eleven and was ticking away in a discouraged manner on the next hour, but young Fitzmaurice de Bang had not gone. The young lady was gazing dreamily at him, or rather through him, and his heart stirred with a vague, nebulous rapture. "Aw—Miss Laura," he said, tenderly, "may I ask you what you are looking at?" "Nothing," she murmured, and her pensive dreamy gaze still seemed to rest on the young man. Fitzmaurice de Bang sat in thoughtful silence for nearly ten minutes. Then a light appeared to dawn by degrees on his mind. He reached mechanically for his hat, rose in a preoccupied way, moved abstractedly towards the door, went slowly out, and she never saw him again.



## SOCIETY.

NOVELS constitute nine-tenths of all the books read in this country.

HIS MAJESTY has a most wonderful memory, and can clearly retain thousands of faces.

THE Queen of Italy is probably the finest pedestrian and most active mountain climber amongst European royalties.

THE Grand Duke George of Russia is to proceed from Denmark by easy stages to Algiers, where he has been advised to winter.

In Antwerp a woman has taken a prize in Flemish literature which is offered by the State once in five years.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHRISTIAN have the pleasure of having their eldest son with them for a while previous to his Highness's departure for India.

THE Queen-Regent of the Netherlands has sent the German Emperor a painting on the celebrated Delft porcelain, as a souvenir of his visit to Amsterdam.

THE Duchess of Albany is cruising with a party of friends in a yacht lent to Her Royal Highness by the Queen. The Duchess is a good sailor, and enjoys the novelty of yachting life.

WHEN Napoleon III. before declaring war upon Prussia, asked one of his Ministers if everything were in readiness for the army to move on Berlin, the latter replied: "To the last button on the last gaiter."

FON SLIGHT forms a becoming and picturesque style which promises to become fashionable as puffs over the hips, under a Swiss bodice or corselet.

THE Queen of the Belgians, who is staying at Spa, in company with the Princess Marguerite, has reaped much benefit from the bracing air of the Ardennes, and has completely recovered from her recent indisposition.

THE Queen is to reside at Balmoral until the third week in November, when the Court will remove to Windsor Castle. The Empress Eugénie is expected shortly at Birkhall, which the Queen has lent to her for as long a period as she likes to stay there.

THE President of the French Republic is to be made a G.C.B., and, with M<sup>me</sup>. Carnot, will in all probability be the guest of the Queen next season at Buckingham Palace, one other expected lions of 1892, being the King and Queen of Italy.

THE British Association was founded at York in 1831, at the suggestion of Sir D. Brewster, for the purpose of stimulating scientific inquiry, and for promoting the intercourse of scientific men. The Association meets annually for one week in a different town, but never in London.

WHEN the Duke and Duchess of Connaught return from abroad, they will go to Scotland where the Queen will be, and Her Majesty will lend them Aberfeldie Castle. Excellent sport is being carefully reserved on Her Majesty's estates for her favourite son.

THE Kaiser has taken good care to show himself to all and sundry once more in the saddle, and managed, in spite of the unkind rumours as to his recent illness, to look as if he enjoyed taking part in a review; the devoted Kaiserin rides by her lord and master's side, looking very charming in a white riding habit.

THE Russian Imperial Family will return to St. Petersburg toward the end of October to prepare for the celebration of the silver wedding of the Czar and Czarina. It has been decided to hold the festivities in connection with this event on the 9th of November in St. Petersburg, and not in Copenhagen as was originally proposed.

## STATISTICS.

THE equatorial diameter of the earth is about 7,926 miles.

THERE are more than 2,000 Smiths in the London Directory.

THERE is only one sudden death amongst women to eight amongst men.

THE Crown forests of Tasmania cover over 16,000,000 acres. The gum trees are the most common, and some are of great size.

THE following table shows the average number of days that notes of different denominations remain in circulation, according to observations made by a banking authority:—£5, 73; £10, 8; £20, 57; £30, 19; £40, 44; £50, 39; £100, 28; £200, 12; £300, 11; £500, 12; £1,000, 12.

## GEMS.

SOME will find fault where others would never think of looking for it.

MANY troubles spring from idleness, and manifold grievous toils from needless ease. Many without labour would live by their wits, but they break for want of stock.

THAT is a good hand which does its work well; whatever it may be, wherever it may lie, it doth not grow weary, and it doeth its work so it is worth its wage.

If genius is to find expression it must employ art, for art is the external expression of our thoughts. Many have genius, but wanting art are for ever dumb. The two must go together to form the great painter or sculptor.

In order to secure a long life and green old age, bodily vigour should be sustained by regular, systematic exercise, avoiding all sudden strain and prolonged exertion. Especially is this true of running, lifting, climbing, etc. And labour, while desirable in moderation, should never be prolonged till it produces exhaustion.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

YEAST.—Boil a handful of hops in a quart of water for half-an-hour, pour it boiling through a colander on to three-quarter pound of white flour, give it a stir, and let it stand till tepid; then add to it one breakfast-cup of brewer's yeast (from the baker's), stir again, and let it stand near the fire for twenty-four hours; it is then ready. By keeping a little of this yeast in a bottle to add to the new one, you may be quite independent of baker's or brewer's yeast after the first making.

CURRENT SCONES.—1lb. flour, one teaspoonful baking soda, half-teaspoonful tartaric acid, two teaspoonfuls of sugar, 2oz. currants, some buttermilk. Mix all the dry things together, and mix it to a paste with the buttermilk. Divide it in two pieces, and make each piece round and less than half an inch thick; brush them over the top with milk or milk and egg mixed, and put them in a pretty hot oven till they are ready. The currants are washed and dried. The currants may be left out, and plain soda scones will be the result.

ELDERBERRY WINE.—To make elderberry wine, pick the berries, bruise and strain them; let the liquor settle in a glazed earthenware vessel for twelve hours; put to every pint of the juice a pint and a half of water, and to every gallon of this liquor three pounds of sugar; set in a kettle over the fire, and when about to boil, clarify with the white of eggs well beaten; then let it boil for an hour; when almost cold put into a barrel with yeast, and fill up regularly with some of the saved liquor as it sinks by working; in a month it may be bottled.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

SKY BLUE is the mourning colour of the Armenians.

A TRIBE called the Siwash believes in a hall of ice, and cremate their dead.

CONSUMPTION is more prevalent in Ireland than in either England or Wales.

SALMON, pike, and goldfish are said to be the only fish that never sleep.

THE density of population in England is estimated at four hundred and ninety-two to the square mile.

In proportion to its population, Australia is the largest tea-consuming country, and England stands second.

THE greatest depth to which any diver in diving dress has descended is two hundred and four feet.

ONE of our seeming necessities of life—sugar—was unknown to the ancients. Honey was its single substitute, and in most remarkable combinations and under strange conditions was it used. Upon meats, stewed, fried, boiled, and baked, it was poured.

THE Arab regards it as good manners to make as much noise as possible while eating, and a traveller ignorant of this custom, and therefore sedulous to devour his meal as silently as need be, has before now been asked "whether he was a beggar, that he munched his victuals as if he were ashamed of them."

A MEDICAL MAN affirms that in his opinion spoiled potatoes and other decaying cellar rubbish are responsible for a great many of the deaths from so-called "grip" and "heart failure." A little less lingering at the medicine bottle, and a good deal more purification, would be a sensible measure to adopt for such as aspire to live long in the land.

PERILS at sea are multiplied when accidents occur in the gloom of night. As a means of lessening these perils, it is suggested that each passenger steamer be compelled to carry search-lights, and be thus enabled to illuminate the sea on all sides of the ship to discover the whereabouts of unfortunate wrecks who would otherwise be, hopelessly struggling to attract the attention of persons able to save them.

WHILE the earth would be swallowed up completely if dropped into some of the sun-spot holes that look to us like mere specks on the solar surface, the sun, on the other hand, is so large that although its distance from us is nearly ninety-three million miles, yet only a little more than one hundred suns laid in a row, touching one another, would reach the earth.

SOME of the New York theatres now provide iced air for their patrons. The Standard Theatre uses about two tons of ice in this way every evening. A fan in the basement draws in the outside air, which, on its way to this fan, passes over ice placed on shelves. The temperature is thus easily reduced to 70 deg. Fahrenheit. A second fan is placed on the roof and exhausts the air from the interior, so that there is a constant change of atmosphere.

THE Hindoo considers the kitchen as a sacred place, and in it no one is allowed to wear shoes. Even in the richest families the women consider it a pride to perform the kitchen duties, and no Hindoo would take food unless it was prepared by a female who has come from a good family, and who is chaste and high minded. A Hindoo wife is faithful to her husband both during his life and after his death. The sublime tenderness of the Hindoo marriage tie is quite incomprehensible to ordinary European understanding. No religious service is perfect unless the wife takes her share in it. Divorce is not known in Hindoo law, nor is there any such thing among the Hindoos. The whole self-adjusting machinery of the family life works with perfect harmony.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—No tax.

**TRouble.**—The address is, 12, St. Helen's-place, E.C.

**ANXIOUS.**—Certainly not; but take a lawyer's advice.

**OLD READER.**—You had better ask a lawyer.

**F. J. P.**—We have no statistics at hand on the subject.

**PALE BLUE.**—Benzine ought to take it out, but if not, you had better take it to a dyer's.

**L. G. B. W.**—You will find out at any police station. The price is five shillings.

**A SUFFERER.**—Unless you have positive proof of your wife's death, or are divorced, you cannot marry again.

**GERDA.**—The only cosmetics we ever recommend are fresh air and plenty of soap and water.

**MARY H.**—The only way to remove them is by pulling them out by the roots as fast as they grow.

**A LOVER OF THE READER.**—As you say no single payment exceeded 41, no receipt stamp is necessary.

**CONSTANT READER.**—It can be made without a lawyer, but it is a thing we should not advise.

**A. B. C.**—We should want other questions answered before we could give an opinion. Consult a medical man. We do not see any cause for anxiety.

**ANXIOUS MOTHER.**—It arises from want of cleanliness. Give it attention and care, and you will find the desired improvement.

**DICK.**—You will get all your information from the nearest recruiting sergeant, or if you write to Horse Guards.

**ANTI-LANCET.**—We do not know what you mean. Licences for what? Gun, dog, publican, auctioneer, or what?

**AN INTERESTED ONE.**—Yours is a question for a lawyer to decide. You had better apply to some respectable solicitor.

**MONA.**—Apply to the Emigrant Inquiry Office, Broadway, Westminster. They will give you all the information you require.

**IGNORAMUS.**—1. We should advise you to apply to a medical man, your health must be a little out of order. 2. The gentleman is always introduced to the lady.

**TOM TIT.**—The man can go into lodgings if he likes; but we do not know how he is to force his wife to go with him if she objects to doing so.

**D. D.**—A search will be made in the registers on payment of one shilling for each year searched, and 2s. 6d. will be charged for copy of entry.

**LOOKER.**—Change given in error may be recovered as a debt. To knowingly keep money not properly in your possession would be the act of a dishonest man.

**ENGLISHMAN.**—Nationality is blood, nativity is birthplace. A man therefore takes his nationality from his father, and his nativity from the place where he was born.

**BOXER.**—Anyone is a professional athlete who takes part in open competitions. An amateur may not compete at gatherings where there are money prizes, local or otherwise.

**NED.**—1. Conveyancing is not illegal. 2. There are several ways of changing your name, but the usual method is to deposit a poll-deed in the Court of Chancery.

**MY LADY.**—There is no such thing known as "calling a man a knight by courtesy." Courtesy titles are borne only by sons of noblemen, who take one of the several minor titles their fathers possess.

**DITA.**—If the coin was had the clerk was justified in destroying it; if good, you may claim its value. See the person who gave you the coin, and call the clerk as witness.

**SUSIE.**—The deserter after delivering himself up and undergoing punishment would have to obtain consent of his commander before he could buy himself off, and consent might be withheld.

**TENANT.**—All goods found in the tenant's house may be distrained upon; so that your wife's separate business had better be carried on in separate premises, rented in her name.

**ROSEKIN.**—The lines quoted,  
"Soft as the memory of buried love,  
Pure as the prayer which childhood wafts above,"  
occur in Byron's "Bride of Abydos." Canto I.

**OLD BOY.**—The great clock bell in Worcester Cathedral weighs 44 tons. The weight of Big Ben of Westminster is 15 tons 5½ cwt.; and of the big bell of Lincoln 5 tons 6 cwt.

**MINIE.**—Before carpets came into use, the floors of houses were strewn with rushes. Some of the best carpets take their names from the places where they were first made.

**GINEVRA.**—It has been said of Naples, Rome, and, in fact, of almost every famous city or place, "See—and die," meaning, of course, that there is nothing better or greater or grander to see.

**G. C. C.**—You cannot claim the money, as you were not in any degree related to deceased. Should the brother not take it, then at his death it must pass to *his* remote relatives of your stepfather.

**JONAS.**—You are thinking of the Mersey tunnel.

**REGOL.**—The Registration Act was passed in 1836.

**Y. A.**—You can obtain all particulars at the Admiralty.

**X.**—It will probably be obtainable at Somerset House.

**IGNORANT.**—Nunquam non paratus—never unprepared.

**RADICAL.**—Yes; the Royal Family pay taxes, and the Queen pays income-tax.

**TOM.**—The creditor cannot detain. He must proceed in the County Court.

**DATES.**—Odessa was partially bombarded by the British on April 31, 1854.

**FLORIAN.**—It can be done by private arrangement with the Post-office.

**FARMER.**—The Emigration Information Office, Broadway, is a Government Office.

**CLARA.**—A shopkeeper cannot be compelled to sell any specific article exhibited in his window.

**TATTOO.**—Much depends on the process employed. As a rule, they are indelible.

**GAMES.**—Yes, draughts would be counted a game if played in a public-house.

**F. B.**—We are not aware of any census having been taken of the different Christian sects in India.

**MRS. S.**—The man is an Irishman, of course, if his parents are Irish, no matter where he was born.

**DON'T KNOW.**—No British soldier requires to salute a native officer of India.

**AMY.**—Southampton and the Isle of Wight are in Hampshire. Litchfield is in Staffordshire.

**SIR PHILIP.**—As you state the case we see no impropriety in the young lady making the call in question.

## A CONTRAST.

Two men toiled side by side from sun to sun,  
And both were poor;  
Both sat with children, when the day was done,  
About their door.

One saw the beautiful in crimson cloud  
And shining moon;  
The other, with his head in sadness bowed,  
Made night of noon.

One loved each tree and flower and singing bird  
On mount or plain;  
No music in the soul of one was stirred  
By leaf or rain.

One saw the good in every fellow-man,  
And hoped the best;  
The other marvelled at his Master's plan,  
And doubt confessed.

One, having heaven above and heaven below,  
Was satisfied;  
The other, discontented, lived in woe,  
And hopeless died.

S. K. B.

**MAY.**—She entered London on 7th March, 1863, and the marriage took place three days later.

**LADY ANN.**—The date of his birth being in dispute, his age at the time you mention cannot be determined.

**STUPID.**—Queen Victoria succeeded to the throne on June 20, 1837, on the death of her uncle, King William IV.

**BOY BLUE.**—The "head" of the ship is called captain. The "head" of a regiment is the colonel, not the captain.

**MISS DANE.**—The city of big things, Chicago, is about to erect an apartment-house which will contain 707 rooms.

**FRITTERS.**—The Gordon Highlanders are at Ceylon. They wear a dark green tunic, but have yellow facings on their scarlet tunics.

**IN EARNEST.**—The season for emigrating to Canada is now over for the year. You must wait till next spring, and see how things are then.

**GEORGE.**—The crocodile of the Ganges, the largest of the species, has as many as 120 teeth, conical in shape, and slightly inclined backwards.

**FAIGHTENED.**—The viper or adder is the only venomous snake in Britain. The word snake just means "the crawling animal."

**FITZ.**—The summer of 1879 was an extremely wet one, but we are unable to say whether it was the wettest of the century.

**L. M.**—You will find the line, "With just enough of learning to misquote" in Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

**OLD READER.**—The Stamese twins, Chang and Eng, died at Mount Airy, near Greensboro, N.C., Jan. 17, 1874, aged 63, respectively.

**TOMMY.**—The charge of the Light Brigade was made at Balaklava during the Crimean war. The object was to capture certain Russian guns.

**LETTY.**—It would be against our rule to recommend any particular maker. Make inquiry and exercise your own judgment.

**POOR ANN.**—Soldiers on furlough are now allowed to travel to and from their destination at single fare for the double journey.

**VICTIM.**—The last date of which we have any record of the price of bread being 10½d. per 4lb. loaf, was March, 1868.

**SMITH.**—The chief food of the common whale consists of opacusm shrimps, which it swallows in countless myriads.

**IN TROUBLE.**—There is no imprisonment for debt; but if he can pay and will not, he may, after judgment, be committed for contempt.

**ONE WORD.**—Caracoly is an alloy of gold, silver, and copper, used in the manufacture of inferior jewellery. It is pronounced as if spelled kar-a-kol-a.

**PLANTS.**—There are said to be about 70,000 species of plants in a single collection in Paris, and about 250,000 species in all on the globe.

**ENLISTING.**—Briefly, at your post-office. When recruits are wanted a placard saying so will be seen there, as also at the Volunteer headquarters; but it is only at intervals men are wanted for the Household Cavalry.

**RAM.**—The last great battle of Napoleon Bonaparte was fought at Waterloo. It resulted in the complete overthrow of the French Emperor. Wellington commanded the allied English, Netherland, and German troops.

**FAED.**—An egg when exposed to the air loses weight day by day, and the diminution in its density shows the length of time it has been kept. Hence a stale egg floats through its increased lightness.

**NO LAWYER.**—Every business agreement should be in writing; but witnesses are not absolutely necessary. The value of the stamp depends on several considerations; in some cases no stamp is necessary.

**MISS N.**—A basinet is a light basin-shaped helmet, generally without a visor, worn by infantry. It is pronounced as if spelled bas-e-net, the accent on the first syllable. It is also written basinet and basnet.

**VERGES.**—Lambeth degrees are those conferred by the Archbishop of Canterbury by virtue of a statute of the reign of Henry VIII. Full particulars would be supplied through the Archbishop's chaplain.

**DINA.**—Anne of Cleves was married to Henry VIII. of England, January 6, 1540. He divorced her in July of the same year, and settled upon her an annuity of £3,000. She was the daughter of Duke John III.

**COLLIE'S DARLING.**—1. You can only find out by advertising. 2. If you were married the business would be taken in your husband's name. The 26th of October, 1871, fell on a Thursday.

**AMC.**—1. The mother can hardly expect to get the money unless she looks after it. Of course a receipt is required, the same as for any other payment. As for question 2, it is a matter to be decided between yourselves entirely.

**HOUSEHOLDER.**—The notices required is not determined by the periods at which rent is paid, but by the terms of the hiring. If the house was taken by the week, a week's notice; if by the month, a month's notice is required.

**LOOKER.**—The railway company are responsible for passengers' luggage lost out of the guard's van. They have even been held liable in the value of things taken from passenger carriages during the temporary absence of passenger owners.

**F. H. E.**—The odds for jubilee coins has come to an end. They are worth no more now than their metal value, although, of course, you may meet with a chance enthusiast who may give you a small premium on them.

**MOTHER.**—What the girl must do is to remember the respect she owes to herself, and if she finds her quondam admirer is disposed to alight her she must resist the insult he thereby puts upon her by just cutting him dead.

**BAN.**—If your health is good, the fact that you are slightly knock-kneed will not in any way obstruct your entrance to the Civil Service. It is not even objected to in military service. There is hardly a cavalry soldier who is not knock-kneed.

**M. A. A. M.**—The Seven Wonders are: 1. The pyramids of Egypt. 2. The mausoleum, or tomb built for Mausolus, king of Caria, by Artemisia, his queen. 3. The temple of Diana at Ephesus. 4. The walls and hanging gardens of the city of Babylon. 5. The vast brazen image of the sun at Rhodes, called the Colossus; and 7. The pharos, or watch-tower, built by Ptolemy, king of Egypt.

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